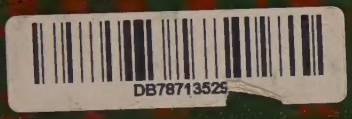
SATAN AS LIGHTNING



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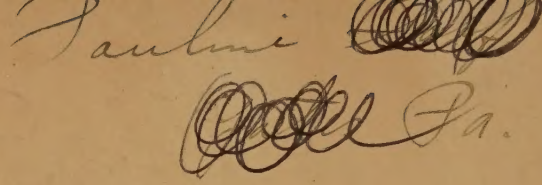

SATAN AS LIGHTNING

A Novel by BASIL KING

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BASIL KING

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"I saw Satan as lightning fall from Heaven."

—Jesus Christ.

"There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect
round."

—Robert Browning: *Abt Vogler.*

SATAN AS LIGHTNING

Part One

He woke before daylight. He knew it was before daylight, not because dawn, that remote and spectral memory, would work any change in the semi-darkness of his cell, but because the perceptions that were independent of the senses told him so. One of the gifts imparted by prison is this quickening of the intuitions. Where between one human being and another intercourse is measured by the inch the supersensuous faculty for knowing things becomes more acute.

For the reason that he didn't want to sleep he lay awake. Up to within a few days and nights sleep had been his one way of escape. Lost in the unconscious, wandering in dreams, or haunted by nightmare, he was away from the actuality. Now the actuality was rather sweet, because it was to end.

He listened. From neighboring cells he heard heavy breathings, snores, groans, an occasional shriek or shout. Along the corridor came the slippered shuffle of the guard. A rattling of bars told him that the keeper was admitting to his cell some one who had been working all night in the power-house. They had grown to be almost friendly sounds, tokens of companionship. Sleeping in a cell was like sleeping in a grave, except for these reminders that in the adjoining graves the sleepers were not dead. It was one degree better than burial alive.

There was a time when he had scarcely thought it so. Three years and nine months earlier death had

seemed the easier way. It would at least be death, with everything over. Whatever he might then have to face, he would not be obliged to go back among the people he had known and whom now he never wished to see again. But that time passed. He learned to endure. He learned to endure in the hope of making those who had put him where he was pay for it. That hope had carried him along. It was all that nerved him now to returning among men.

When the bell clanged for getting up he was able to take his time. He heard the stirrings in the cells. He heard the creakings and the gratings as the keepers unlocked the doors. He heard the scuffling of feet as the men moved out into the corridor or clattered down iron staircases, tramping off to the mess-hall. To lie there and know that he should never again have to march in that line, not unless he came back, was a foretaste of liberty.

Getting up to dress, he put on for the last time the prison uniform. For him its gray shoddy, buttoned up to the throat, was the more grotesque because of his stature, his bearing, his straight, strong back, and the way he held his head. It never shamed the slack and stunted thieves and thugs who for the most part were his companions as much as it did himself. He couldn't put it on without the sense of being clothed all over in dishonor.

Everything with which the prison had supplied him—shirts, underclothes, towels—he laid in a pile on the floor. From the cell he had nothing to take—no pictures, no books. In the years he had spent there he

had wanted nothing to remind him of his former life, and now he meant to walk out with nothing to recall the life he was leaving behind. Whatever he carried away with him would be in his heart, and that would be enough.

Having hooked up his bed, he sat down on a stool to wait for the keeper to come for him. In some obscure depth of his being he was conscious of a stirring of regret at leaving. If it was not exactly that; it was at least an aching of the spirit over the whole episode which now was to be closed. The picture of this cell would be forever printed on his brain. However long he might live, however far he might wander, he would always see in thought these walls of rough-hewn stone, oozy and damp from a recent rain, the tin cup on the grating, the stool, the bed, the pail.

It was strange to him now that so long a time had passed since the first night of horror he had spent there. It was not wholly the conditions that had shocked him then; rather it was that he, John Owen Hesketh, the swaggering, the foolhardy, should have come to such an end. More than amazing, it was unbelievable. That sort of thing didn't happen. It hadn't happened. He was in a nightmare, from which he would wake up. When he didn't wake up he had times of being stupefied, stunned, hardly knowing where he was. He had other times when his frenzy proved the wisdom of taking away from him whatever could serve as a weapon.

In those early days he had known fits of such wild exasperation with himself that all he could do was to curse and shout and scream. It was winter when he

went in, and the long solitude of the cell, from half past four in the afternoon till half past six the next morning, allowed the obsession of his folly to track round and round and round his brain, till he beat himself with his own fists, and shrieked for the sake of shrieking. But he got over that. Routine and a sense of shame before others taught him the value of suppression. He suppressed. From all points of view it was "sirwise," politic. If by good conduct he was to shorten the five years of his term, he must be quiet, obedient, unrebellious. He could be what he liked at heart; but outwardly he must school himself to compliance.

So long a time had passed, and yet it had passed like a dream. Looking back over it now, it was less like time he had lived than like time which the scissors of the Fates had clipped out of life. The days melted into one big day; the nights into one big night. There had been so little to distinguish them from one another. Endless as the hours had been, especially those of solitude, they left behind them next to no impression. From one point of view the years had dragged; from another they had blown away.

It had been almost a shock to him when Danny Bird, on the eve of his own going out, had said: "Well, Heskie, we'll soon meet in the open. All you've got now is two months and a wap."

The word wap had frightened him. Less than a month! In his case a few more days than two weeks! Then he would be back in the world again. His sensations were like those of a man who under an anæsthetic

has been tasting the bliss of freedom from the body on being told that his tooth is out and he himself free to return to the sordidness of life.

The two months had passed. The wap had worn down to a "whisper." Now the few days that made up the whisper had gone, and he was ready to go out. It was incredible, and yet, in odd contrast, supremely a matter of course. The moment had come of which he had dreamt as one of ecstasy, but he had no sensations.

It was after seven when that door was unlocked which would not be relocked upon him. In the sense of the enemy with whom one is on amicable terms, the screw was an old friend.

"Well, Heskie, my boy, this'll be a sad partin', won't it?"

He whipped himself to a light good-humor which he scarcely felt. "Perhaps it'll be sadder than you think. I shan't be the one to have a hard word for Bitterwell."

Having picked up the pile of prison property on the floor, he followed the keeper out into the corridor. It was a long straight corridor, cut down through the height of the building as if with a sharp knife. His own cell was on the lowest tier. Above was another tier, opening on an iron gallery. Another tier was lined above that, and another above that, and another above that. Behind the grated doors the men lived like animals in holes, except that animals in holes have volition. They can act singly. Even ants and bees combine a coöperative life with a wide individual freedom. Here the animals went in and came out only as

a body. They formed part of a mechanism in which they had no play for mind.

Mind was almost superfluous. If you used it at all the chances were that you would use it to your hurt. Everything was of iron and stone, grim, gaunt, heartless, and repressive. The very rust, the very smell, the sense of years upon years of memories, of millions of memories from thousands of men—memories of sin, hatred, suffering, and rebellion, which no free air ever blew away—spoke of human beings sentenced not so much to punishment as to corruption and decay. He had always loathed the corridor more than he did his cell.

They came to the state shop. It was the tailors' shop, busy with all the jobs that enter into tailoring. The masses of gray shoddy gave a shade of grayness to the room. Men in gray shoddy were cutting gray shoddy; men in gray shoddy were sewing buttons on gray shoddy; men in gray shoddy were running gray shoddy on sewing-machines. Though he rarely came here, because his own work had been among the painters, these fellows knew him as a chap who was blessed by the chances of that day. A few nodded; a few smiled; there was not an eye that didn't follow him wistfully.

With more badinage from the friendly enemy he changed to the clothes in which he was to go out From the shoes and socks to the tie and handkerchief they were brand-new. On that he had insisted. He would wear nothing he had worn in Bitterwell, nor take from there so much as a collar or a toothbrush. A new man within, he would be a new man outwardly. A new man

outwardly he looked. Dressed in a dark-brown suit, cheap but made to his measurement, a tan shirt, a dark-brown tie, and a soft brown hat of the style known to hatters as Fedora, he looked the ex-convict as little as he might.

From the mirror, as he knotted his tie, he was gratified to see how much he had changed in the years during which he had been "put away." He had not merely grown older; he had become almost another man. The face that at twenty-five had been chubby and rather insolent was, at twenty-nine, long and lean and stamped with a brooding aloofness of which he alone knew the interpretation. Where there had once been a rippling fleetness of smile there was now that haunted reflection of experience which belongs to the faces of men who have been through more than can be told. Of all this he was glad. When back in New York it would make it easier to bury Owen Hesketh and become Jack Owen. He decided to grow a mustache. With the hair on his face growing thick and fast it would soon be long, so helping his disguise.

A remark from the particular friendly enemy under whose eye he was obliged to make his change tended to disturb him.

"Heskie, you'll be a credit to Bitterwell. Lot of girls in Fifth Avenue what you'll knock their eye out."

He didn't want this. The thing of which he was most afraid was what he phrased as "looking romantic." His father "looked romantic," and from him, he supposed, he inherited the trick. If he hadn't "looked romantic" from his boyhood upward he might never

have got in with the girls and women whose demands had made him a wayward son and finally sent him to Bitterwell. His whole ambition, for the next few years at least, must be to pass unnoticed. Yet here he was a noticeable figure before he had reached the outside. It was the worst of being so well set up. It was the worst, above all, of having the Celtic cast of features—Celtic, as modern ethnologists would say, of the Mediterranean type—in which an olive skin, a pair of black eyebrows, a set of long black lashes, and a mane of wavy black hair made a setting for deep-blue eyes in which, in his own case, a painter would see, in certain lights, the faintest tinge of green.

He was ready to go. With such men in gray shoddy as were near him he shook hands. They wished him luck; he wished them luck in return. Keeping up to the end his rôle of the "sirwise" prisoner, he shook hands with the officers in the shop, thanking them for their kindness. They, too, wished him well, some of them with variants on the first comment of his looks. It was curiously friendly, with a rough courtesy. He might have been leaving a job to go to a better one. His heart, heavy for no reason he could give, grew heavier.

With a keeper still by his side he threaded corridors and yards till the last of the iron gates rolled back before him. Having climbed an iron stairway, he found himself in the grim bare office of entry and exit he had passed through three years and nine months previously.

Officer Flanagan, who was in charge, was known for his bitter affability. "So, Heskie, me lad, I suppose you're off for a foliage trip to the White Mountains."

Hating this man, and having no reason to fear him any longer, the ex-convict replied with a sullen grunt, "Off to hell."

Officer Flanagan took this in good part. "Then all the gladder we'll be to see you back home again, which I've no doubt'll be before long."

His emotion on getting back the watch he had given up on entering was the first he had felt. The watch was a surprise. He had all but forgotten it. Now it brought memories with the sudden violence of a cloudburst flinging rain.

It had been a present from his father on the day when he had reached the age of fifteen. He recalled the lines scribbled on the outside of the small white package that lay beside his plate at breakfast. "John Owen Hesketh from his father, in the hope that each tick will mean a second with a good intention." The words had gone with him as an inner refrain all through his wild boyhood, all through his wilder youth. They had been put away only at the minute when the watch itself had been put away. Watch and words had alike become superfluous, since in prison neither time nor intention would have value.

Schooled to a mask of stolidity, he wound the watch, set it by the office clock, and garlanded the chain across his waistcoat. In addition to the watch, the twelve dollars and seven cents he had had on coming in were also handed back to him. With the nearly twenty dollars he had earned by his years of work, ten dollars extra presented by the state, and a ticket to New York, he was practically ready to go out. A few papers

signed, a few more handshakes, a few more words of good-by, and he crossed the little bridge that took him into freedom.

The watch ticked just below his heart. He could feel its weight in his pocket; he could almost hear it. It was like a companion, though not a kindly one. Considering who he was and whence he was coming, its voice was too sardonic. "John Owen Hesketh from his father, in the hope that each tick will mean a second with a good intention." In an aching, resentful, silent way the irony made him laugh.

It was eight o'clock on a morning in October. Because no taxis bringing friends to see prisoners had as yet driven up from the station the open space was empty. Empty, too, was the broad, slightly mounting road that took him toward the town. He was glad of this. For his first steps into the world he wanted no spectator.

He seemed to himself to walk unsteadily. It was as if he had forgotten how to walk, as if he had not regained his strength after rising from a sickness. He knew, of course, that this was fancy, the timidity of the man so long without responsibility for himself on venturing forth alone.

For the first time it entered his mind that he *was* venturing forth alone. He had been so eager for liberty that he had made no forecast of what liberty would entail. The getting out of Bitterwell had been his single preoccupation. Everything else would take care

of itself and fall into place once that milestone was passed.

And now that it was passed he had a sudden strange sense of insecurity. A bird thrust over the edge of the nest before being sure of its strength of wing might have known just this terror. He had never really supported himself. After his dismissal from college he had worked at odd jobs, but he had always worked fitfully, certain that at the worst of times he would have bed and board at home. Even had he married Blandina he would not have had to provide for her, since she had money enough for them both. In prison he had, of course, no primary cares of any kind. He might have cursed, as he often did, the quality of what was given him; but it had been given. Now nothing would be given him at all. He was literally "on his own." With the suit of clothes he wore, and forty dollars in his pocket, he had all he should get except what he got for himself.

At the top of the ascent he paused and turned round. It was what outgoing prisoners always did. Here they could look down on the sinister gray pile, on the yards and sheds, which stood for the bitterest and most enduring experience their lives would ever know. He had often seen them do it when he had happened to be out-of-doors. He had seen men, of whom he was told that they had been released months or years before, steal back to this spot, at intervals when they had the day to spare, and, from motives they could never have explained, live again through their memories. He had always sworn that he himself would stalk on without

a turn of the head; but now that he was there the impulse was too strong for him.

Even if he were to come back again, no second experience would have the anguish of that first one. The man who had never been in prison couldn't imagine what it was. It was not the humiliation alone, or the loss of liberty, or the hideous routine; it was the knowledge that for all the rest of his life there would be a secret stamp on him. He had been in prison. It would be saying enough. It would be saying all. It would fix a gulf between him and his fellow-men. The crime would be of less importance than the fact that he had paid for it. It would be the paying that printed him with the stigma. If he hadn't paid, however guilty, however positively known to have been guilty, no opinion, private or public, in America, would have condemned him. That was the fact which more than any other bred resentment in Bitterwell. The men talked of it at all times. There were thousands of people, millions, perhaps, who had done worse than they had done, who were known to have done it, and yet were held in esteem because they hadn't been in jail. It gnawed in his own heart, making him eager for revenge.

What he understood less were his twinges of regret. The weary, revolting life had grown into him. Wrenching himself from it now was like tearing out a nerve-center. It was not his affections that were involved, but something more vital than affection, more tense, and wholly indefinable. To say that he had known friendship there, or that the brutal leveling to which all were subjected had given him a fierce fraternity

with crime, was not an explanation. It was rather that the experience had had tentacles. Pulling himself loose from it, he pulled some of the tentacles away with him. Something of himself, on the other hand, he left in the claws from which he was wresting himself free.

Gaunt walls with, at each angle, a turret in which stood an armed sentinel, inclosed a gaunt quadrangle. Men were moving about in it, as he himself had moved about there yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that, back into a serried monotony of days of which none stood out from any other. One of the men looked up and waved his hand to him; he waved his own in response. He didn't know who it was—at this distance they all looked alike—but one of the fellows he had chummed up with had been watching for his passing, and was sorry he had gone. He would leave an empty spot. He knew what such empty spots meant. It was a strange how, when you had no one else to care for, you could care for the most forbidding samples of mankind. When they went away they left these vacant, silent places, to be filled only with memory.

Lifting up his eyes to the landscape, he also lifted up his heart. Rather his heart lifted up itself, in a bound of delighted astonishment. He had forgotten that the world looked like this, that it was so big, that its incitements were so generous. The setting was the inspiriting autumnal one, more thrilling than that of spring. It came to him again, as it had come many times in his life before Bitterwell, that fall and not spring is the American renewal of the year. Summer is an interlude, a period of suspense. It is the dead

time, in which nothing happens. The active spirit chafes through it in the hope of leaving it behind. Winter is vitality, accomplishment, advance, and autumn is its prelude. Over the landscape around him, over the hills beyond the expanse where the river widens to the Bitter Zee, the golds and scarlets and bronzes which told him that summer was dead told him also that a season of new life was coming to the birth. In the brisk sunny air, with the sharpness in it of an early frost, he felt the new life's stimulus. It was in his own blood. It was in his own heart. It touched his imagination with the prospect of things to be done. He was young and eager, even if he had the prison blight on him. He burned with the ardor to begin.

If he only knew what to begin at. . . . And just as he reached that thought he heard himself called:

"Say, Heskie, old sport! Got ahead of me. I sure thought I'd be waiting for you to come up the hill. Would have been, only that the darned old train was late."

For a long two seconds Owen stood dumbfounded. He was not expecting Danny Bird. He didn't want him. It was not because it was Danny Bird that he didn't want him, but because of his anxiety to be free of Bitterwell. And here was Bitterwell coming to meet him before he had fully turned his back on it.

"Why, hello, Danny! What are you doing up here?"

"Come to meet you, old scout—to see what I could do."

"Well, you can't do anything. There's nothing I want done."

Danny's face went blank. It was a long thin face, with a long pointed chin which, swerving to the left, put the tip an inch off center. A long thin nose, a long thin mouth, and two small worried eyes set very far apart made you think of a mediæval face by Memling or Lucas Cranach. Except that he was a little man, everything about him was long and thin—the shape of his head, the round of his neck, his feet, his arms, and especially his hands. His fingers, making stealthy undulating movements, as if from two sets of knuckles, could extract objects from pockets, or pick them up in the open, with the rapid secrecy of legerdemain.

If Danny was hurt by Hesketh's disclaim of assistance, it was only to the degree that made his tone apologetic: "Well, I didn't know. The last time I saw you you said you wasn't going back to your folks. If you are, I needn't have come."

"But I'm not."

"Then what are you goin' to do?"

Owen answered, loftily, "Oh, something—anything."

"Do you mean that you don't know, or that you won't tell me? There's one thing I'd like to say right now: I'll not butt in if you don't want me."

With too many tender memories of Danny Bird to permit of his being brutal, Owen evaded the issue by proposing that they go on toward the station.

"You see, Heskie," Danny explained, "when I took my job I told my boss that I'd have to have the seventh

of October off, and he agreed. That's how I got the day."

"Damn kind of you, Danny, to remember that that was the morning I was coming out."

"Why, I've been livin' for it, darn you!"

To Owen the bald emotion of this response brought the shock of a new form of impropriety. Through the corner of his eyes he looked out over the Bitter Zee, without an adequate reply. The whole of his friendship with Danny Bird focused itself here, where he must decide on the spur of the moment whether to break it off offensively or go on with it. If he went on with it, Bitterwell would be with him still; if he broke it off, something kindly, appealing, and winsome in its way would be stabbed.

It was the kind of friendship prison can bring about, but which outside life hardly ever knows. Prison may be said to strip off the conventions as it strips off the clothes, giving a new set of standards with a new suit of garments. Neither standards nor conventions are done away with; they are only differently fixed. In the outside world both conventions and standards bear a relation, more or less remote, to honesty and probity; in prison these tests are removed. Nobody is supposed to have lived up to them. There are consequently no pretensions and no hypocrisies. You have no reason to conceal what you have done, since it can easily enough be known. You can easily enough know it of another man. The result is a certain freedom from constraint, with the chances of a soul-to-soul frankness out of keeping with the bluff of a law-abiding virtue.

Friendship thus becomes based on a system of affinities in which a law-abiding virtue has no part. Social value has no part in it, nor consideration of the fitting or of the advantageous. What draws men together in that case is their fundamental need, the yearning for some one to care about and to care about them. Lost among the malefactors of mankind, counted as one of them yourself, with evil-doing in the air in which you eat and work and sleep, you crave for love as a bird craves for the sky or the sea-grass for the sea. Only a spiritual genius like Mrs. Eddy could have paraphrased the words, "Give us this day our daily bread" as "Feed the famished affections." In prison the affections are famished more than any other faculty. When you are starving you seize your food wherever it is offered you. Owen had seen a banker chumming up with a yeggman, a gunman with a clergyman. Their social, moral, and mental differentiations having all been swept away, they had nothing left but their desperate human clinging to one another.

So when Danny Bird came bringing the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of his distorted life Owen felt a curious new joy. His own affections had been famished without his knowing it. His engagement to Blandina having ended with his sentence, his heart had been benumbed. If toward his family he felt anything, it was resentment. Against Wrig Coppard, his life-long bosom friend, he burned with a hatred which he was sure would last beyond his life. The least he could say of Wrig he had said to his father, the second time the latter had come to visit him.

"Wrig," the father had said, tremulously, "told me to say that he'd come up to see you when he got the time."

Owen's dark face had flushed as at an insult. "He said that, did he? Well, tell him to keep away. Tell him I couldn't see him here without committing murder. Say that, and he'll understand you perfectly."

The father had begun some reprimanding protest, when Owen had stood up. "And, father, I just want to say to yourself, Don't come any more. I'd rather not see you. I don't think of you as a father; I think of you as an executioner. When it came to sacrificing old William Coppard or me, you sacrificed me; and you did it because he had money and you were afraid of him. You put me here, father, when you could have saved me."

"But I'd saved you before, and all to no purpose. When William Coppard insisted ——"

"I don't want to discuss it, father, and I don't want to see you any more. I don't mean ever to forgive you."

The handsome face, as romantic above its round clergyman's collar as Owen's own, looked up in an anguish that silenced the relentless son.

So no more visitors summoned Owen Hesketh into the big gaunt room, with the tiny pens, where men in the sorrow of disgrace met wives or sons or brothers, and sometimes played with their little children. Owen had no one. He asked for no one. What he had to bear he would bear alone. It would be easier.

It was easier—and lonelier. It was lonelier than any

form of loneliness he had ever supposed to exist. It was not like the loneliness of the country, of the desert, of the forest, of the city, of the sea, or of the foreign land. It suggested one state of being and one only, the loneliness of hell. In the minutes when his passion of suppression drove him back on his solitary broodings he imagined hell as a place like this, to which men were railroaded for the very reason that they didn't want to go. Set to work they didn't want to do, they were herded with those with whom it was punishment merely to come in contact. He had never supposed that the evil in human nature would ever be a horror to him; but he had never before touched it in the mass. Eating his meals in the mess-hall, or looking at motion pictures in the chapel, the malign exhalation from twelve or fifteen hundred hearts, most of them morally abnormal and viciously criminal, afflicted him like physical asphyxiation.

For more than a year he breathed in evil through all the pores of his senses and his intelligence, as the fellows he heard of in Flanders breathed in poisoned gas. For a while he thought it would kill him; but it didn't; he got used to it. But he was cut off abysmally from humankind, till the little pickpocket with the crooked, mediæval face tumbled into his life, with shy but blunt admiration. It was then that he learned that every human soul, even a pickpocket's soul, has its ideal, and that he was Danny Bird's.

Danny worshiped him, and would have served him had the swing of the Bitterwell pendulum allowed any room for service. This it scarcely did. Only when the

strictest rules were relaxed, as on the ball-ground on a Sunday afternoon, was there often an opportunity for more than nods between them; but whenever the chance came, Danny seized it. It was not in human nature to refuse a friendship offered with so much fervor and at the same time so much humility. Owen knew that he was Danny's ideal because he stood for a higher life than the crooks, bandits, and safe-breakers who made up Danny's gang. Danny practically told him so.

"Gee! I wish I was a straight six-footer like you!" "Gee! I wish I had them funny eyes: you can't tell whether they're blue or green!" "Gee! I wish I could speak your kind of talk, that makes anyone know you're a gentleman before you've said three words."

To Owen the flattery couldn't help being sweet, while the intrusion into his solitude of anyone at all broke the dreariness of mental isolation. There was no one in Bitterwell whom he wanted as a friend; there was no one who seemed to want to make a friend of him. Danny Bird brought that kind of timid, insistent caress with which a little dog may comfort a man whose heart is breaking. The caress may have no value of the kind that can be reckoned up, and yet some wellnigh unbearable ache may be soothed by it.

So whenever their scant leisure allowed them the opportunity, which was chiefly on Sunday afternoons, they sought each other out. As they sat on the bleachers, nominally looking at a game, they were really unburdening their hearts. Danny confessed himself artlessly, after the manner of his kind. Owen came to it more slowly, but he came to it. The relief of telling his tale

into any human ear was so great that once he had begun he told Danny all. Each then knew of the other whatever there was to know. Henceforth they could talk with that nakedness of mind possible in prison but never out of it.

What it taught Owen was that, given nakedness of mind, men were more alike than he had supposed them. Between Danny Bird and himself the differences of which he had taken cognizance were chiefly those of education and standing in the world. Where standing in the world was abolished, education disappeared as a useless accomplishment. He and Danny were as two souls in space, with little to choose between them.

It taught him, too, that moral sense and human need are different activities. Danny was a thief in grain, and yet he had the same affections as if he had been honest. Honesty or dishonesty made no more difference to the cravings of his heart than a taste in food or colors. Moreover, his cravings stood for what he understood as the best. He, Owen Hesketh, represented that. He was tall and strong and good-looking; he had the manners and the way of speaking belonging to that world for which Danny had only the word, Society. Whatever might be said of Danny's tricks of legerdemain, "the light of his soul," as Meredith somewhere says, "burned upward."

It had always burned upward, or so it seemed, only that its flame was feeble. Being feeble, the winds of life had all but blown it out. The current phrase applied to him was that of "a moral moron," which perhaps was what he was; but no school for the morally

feeble-minded had ever tried to supply what nature had refused him in the first place. He was a thief; and yet he had a sort of value. To Owen his value was in bringing him back into the human fold. He gave him a pal. Bitterwell became endurable. A world in itself, different from every other world, it developed the interests which enable men to live. Owen lived; he lived again. It was a kind of resurrection. That he hadn't died a death more destructive than that of the body he owed to Danny Bird.

All this he thought of during the two or three minutes they walked on in silence. It was silence because for the moment Danny had said what he had to say, and Owen had nothing to say at all. The question before him was that of companionship. He could shake Danny off and wound a faithful soul; or he could be true to a friendship which outside of Bitterwell he didn't want. To speak of Danny's work enabled him to temporize.

"So you've got a job. What at?"

"House-paintin'. I'm a house-painter, you know. And, say, Heskie, it's the life!"

"What's the life?—house-painting?"

"No; bein' on the level; work."

"So you've come round to that?"

"Yes; and I wanted to tell you."

"Well, I'm glad for your sake."

"And I'm glad for yours. Heskie, they'll never, never ketch me at the old game again."

"That's fine."

"Yes, it's fine; but what I wanted to say, Heskie, is

that I hope they'll never ketch you. I thought if I told you what I'd found out maybe you'd ——"

"Take the good word from you. Well, Danny, it's just what I meant to do. I told you that while we were inside. I was a rotter. I gave everyone a lot of trouble. I got into a bad scrape. I've paid for it. I'm another man. I'm not going to begin in the same old way again."

"How are you goin' to live?"

"I'll have to get a job."

"Do you know how to get one?"

"I've got jobs before."

"I thought you said that your father had got 'em for you."

"Well, so he did; but this time ——"

"It's pretty hard, Heskie, and often a long wait."

"I'll live through that."

"How?"

The direct question called for one of those direct answers which Owen was not prepared to give. He had forty dollars in his pocket; a good suit on his back; he had brought his mind to no details. "I'll decide that when I get to New York," he said, in the lordly way he assumed when he was uncertain.

"There's one thing you can't decide when you get to New York, and that's how far forty dollars—that's what you said you'd have—can be made to go—with a chap of your cut."

"I suppose it'll go as far with a chap of my cut as with a chap of any other."

"Oh no, it won't! Don't kid yourself! In forty

hours forty dollars won't be no more in your hands than forty cents. And remember it's settled between you and me that anything else we get has got to be on the square."

This Danny followed up by a proposal. He had a home, and a good one. Why shouldn't Heskie, if he had no better place to go, come and share it? A dandy little house down by the East River; it had been owned by his father, and now was his mother's. His mother and his sister Katy lived there together. Katy wasn't much, but she made a good cook and housekeeper. Moreover, she was a dandy little earner, too, a dressmaker by trade, and that simple you could talk her out of every cent she made. Lame she was, and walked with a crutch, and her face'd frighten a burglar the minute she struck a match. All the same, she was a good little thing, with nothin' but pity for fellows who came down the river. She'd seen a good many of them, and every blessed one she'd put back into the right way. If Heskie 'u'd only be satisfied with one of the beds in her attic room, he himself would have the other bed. . . .

Katy Bird slowed down the rocking of her chair as a captain slows down his engines on coming into port. She even relaxed the flying of her knitting-needles round and round the edges of an incipient sock. Any such letting up of speed in her tireless activities was a sign of unusual concentration of the mind.

"Now I want to get this thing straight, and so far

I don't seem to. By what you're telling me, the check the rich man sent to your father was a small one."

"Yes; for nine dollars. It was a little fund my father was getting up—something connected with a choir—and which lacked nine dollars to complete it. This rich man—who was interested in the fund anyhow—added the nine dollars to what he'd contributed already, so that they shouldn't have to make any more appeals."

"And your father gave the check to you."

"He indorsed it to me to go and have it cashed. He happened to need the change."

"And you raised it to nine hundred."

"No; the other fellow raised it, the son of the man who'd made it out. He was my chum. We'd done a lot of foolish things together—harum-scarum things that got us into trouble—but this was the worst."

She stopped rocking; she stopped knitting. Her keen little grey-green eyes, like her brother's, only without the slyness lurking behind his, looked at him straight and piercingly. There was something piercing in her face. Though it was not a face which, according to Danny, would scare a burglar the minute she struck a match, it did lack the element of beauty, and still more that of prettiness. And yet it had an attraction, the attraction of experience, of pain, of idealism, combined with a queer, scoffing, skeptical tolerance. Both the tolerance and the skepticism were implied in the set of the thin lips to a fixed faint smile of sardonic amusement. The face had a brightness, too, but the brightness of an ax with a flashing edge on it. She could

cut; she could discern. The fury with which she worked was also a fury of sharp judgments.

Since Jack Owen had appeared that morning she had scarcely noticed him. Expecting his arrival, she had taken the day to work at home. But having allowed Danny to show him the privileges of the tiny house, she swung herself on her crutch from task to task as if unaware that a guest had come. Jack Owen had been obliged to watch for a chance to ask her how much he should pay if he continued to occupy the bed in Danny's room. He got this chance only because she sat down for a few minutes in the kitchen while her mother cooked the evening meal. The mother being dull in all her senses, they could talk with a certain confidence.

Owen was eager to make this confidence, for the reason that, much to his surprise, he saw her as a creature as honest as the sun. From Danny's description, and from Danny himself, this was far from his expectation. Somehow the habit of prison had bred in him the habit of a world not only without secrecy, but without reserves. To be under the same roof with this woman, whose look was as clear as the light, while she didn't know the worst—and the best—about him rendered him uneasy. Having settled the terms on which he should stay, he launched at once into the reasons for his having been at Bitterwell. She had heard such tales before, but never from the lips of a man whose voice and enunciation reminded her that there were other worlds than that of Hoorn's Hoek, and whose eyes were those of the Impossible she had sometimes seen in dreams. Twisted, maimed, ceaselessly suffering,

snappy, and hatchet-faced, Katy Bird had a heart like any other girl's, with a craving for love which never would be, never could be, appeased.

The kitchen was as clean as a new pin. As far as Owen could judge, the whole house was the same. Mrs. Bird's life, whatever it may have been once, had shrunk into a round of sweeping and scouring, without capacity for thought. A thin, slatternly, plaintive woman, she was known among her neighbors as "Nourishment." "I'm pretty well, thank you, but I need nourishment," was her unvarying reply to the customary "How-do-you-do?" She looked as if she did, but the power of nourishment to do her good had ended on the day—Danny was a little boy, and Katy a growing girl—when her husband had gone to the chair for robbery and murder. Women go through such things, but they never do it very well.

In the ceasing to rock and to knit Katy Bird was trying to concentrate her mind. "When you say you've raised a check, just how do you mean it?"

Taking out a pencil, he drew an imaginary check on the margin of a newspaper that happened to be lying to his hand. At the extreme left he wrote the word, *Nine*. "You see," he explained, "although the old bird was a business man and should have been careful in making out a check, he merely wrote the word and made no line—like that—to show that nothing could be added. The same way with the numeral. He simply put down $9, leaving out the decimal point and two zeros. The minute I saw it I knew how easy it would be to change, and so I showed it—to his son."

"But I wonder he didn't stop you."

"You see, he'd done it—we'd done it—once before, and got away with it. For certain words that he'd practiced on he could copy his father's hand so that an expert couldn't tell the difference. The first time it was a check for only two dollars made out to himself. Well, he wrote in the word *hundred*—that way—and indorsed the thing to me. And I cashed it."

"What happened after that?"

"Oh, after that there was the deuce to pay. First the old chap sent for his son. Then he sent for me. Then he got me and his son and my father together. The two dads lambasted us—in words, that is—till we didn't have an inch of skin between us. But they let us off."

"Did they make you cough up the swag?"

"They couldn't. We'd—we'd given it away."

"All that money? For mercy's sake—who to?"

"To women we knew. That is, we gave some of it in presents, and the rest in cash."

"How old were you?"

"Around twenty-one."

"And will you please tell me what a fellow of twenty-one knows about women?"

"For the matter of that, what does a fellow of any age know?"

"Oh, it's not so hard. The best way to size up a woman is to take her at her worst; a man you can take at his best. That works out to about the right average." Once more she began to knit vigorously, but to

rock with moderation. "Well, after your fathers let you off, what'd you do next?"

"We rented a garage."

She did not pause in her activities to express surprise, for her eyes said enough. "Rented a *gar-adge!* For pity's sake, why?"

"You see, they had to do something with us, and as we were crazy about the garage it seemed to be the only thing. My father put up five hundred dollars, and his another five hundred. We were to have paid them back from our first year's profits, but before the year was out we were that much in debt. Then the check for nine dollars came into my hands—and we fell for it."

"And—what then?"

"Then the old man went to law—and I was arrested."

"Wasn't there no talk of letting you off for the second time?"

"Yes; my father and the rich man discussed it. I think my father might have done it; but the rich man insisted that the law should take its course."

"But what about his son?"

"Oh, his son had nothing to do with it—except the writing of the same word in the second check that he'd written in the first."

"But wasn't that anything?"

"Not that any of them knew."

"But you knew."

"Yes, I knew."

"And he knew."

"Yes, and he knew."

Chair and needles were motionless again, while the

flicker of a smile grew more ironic. "And didn't he ——?"

Owen shook his head. "No, he didn't."

"And you never squealed."

"Of course I didn't squeal. But"—his figure stiffened—"but now that I'm out ——"

Her sharp eyes were fixed on him steadily. "Now that you're out—what?"

"I mean to do something more serious than squealing."

"What'd that be?"

"I don't know yet. But I mean to get back at him—if I have to go to Bitterwell again for it."

She began to rock and knit again, looking at her work. "I don't blame you—if you can do any good by it."

"I'll do the good that he'll get what's coming to him."

"Oh, but you don't have to give it to him. He'll get that, anyhow. No fellow can do what he's done and not be paid back."

"But I want to do the paying. There's something inside me that'll never ——"

"Yes, a lot of fellows that come down the river feel that way for a spell. But ——"

"It's no question of a spell with me. It's going to be my life's work till. . . ."

For the time being he could say no more because Katy had to help her mother. With the crutch under her left arm and her left knee bent so that the foot was some ten inches off the floor, she swung herself about the kitchen with the ease of a bird on a branch.

Feeling himself dismissed, Owen, for the first time since his arrival during the forenoon, went out into the yard. Except for the quickly eaten midday meal, he had kept to the attic through fear of going alone into the open.

Part Two

GETTING out at the station in New York, Owen had been appalled. It was as if the city had shot up overnight. Its life had been not only expanded, but intensified. Had Danny not been there to steer and steady him, the crowds, the traffic, the roar, the subways, and above everything else the fantastically high buildings, would have been overwhelming. As it was, the journey uptown, and then eastward to Hoorn's Hoek, had so unnerved him that once at his destination his only desire was to find in the attic the quiet and security of his cell.

But that was beginning to wear off. Now that he had had a preliminary talk with Katy, he felt able to trust himself out-of-doors. He went no farther than into the yard, but for the present that was enough.

The little brick house, so small that it looked like a toy house, and so battered that it seemed as if it must have been built by the Dutch, was a surprise to him. Indeed, all of Hoorn's Hoek was a surprise. Born in New York, coursing it from end to end throughout his turbulent youth, he had nevertheless overlooked the one region of Manhattan in which nature had striven to be grandiose.

Strictly speaking, the East River is not a river at all, but a mere short cut from waterway to waterway. At Throg's Neck it breaks out of the Sound, squeezes itself through Hell Gate, and after swinging in great curves round rocks and islets and into coves, splits into

two straight lines on the nose of Blackwell's Island. Coming out-of-doors, Owen saw the sweep, from Hell Gate on the north to the span of a colossal bridge to southward, as a great cosmic gash. On the opposite bank the shadowy masses of Astoria were wrapped just then in a golden aureole, like the New Jerusalem. The leaden-colored eddies, touched with this gleam of westering light, threw into black relief a fleet of coal-barges resting at anchor. A chain of similar barges was strung behind a tugboat puffing northward. With her red funnel in the stern, a low black freighter was feeling her way downstream to unload perhaps at some market dock. Gulls swooped everywhere, right up to Katy Bird's window-sills, with heavenly flash of wing, and pitiful, hungry twitterings. In the near distance to the south rose a tumble of rocky park, crowned by the spectral Gracie Mansion, already destined, though Owen didn't know it, to be the future Museum of the City of New York. Even from a distance he was awed by its size and emptiness. In a cheery region of brownstone fronts and pert brick dwellings adapted to the powers of one maid-of-all-work the spacious traditions of the eighteenth century were haunting as well as imposing. Deserted, decaying, its pale yellow walls ghostly to an eye accustomed to the reds and browns of the New York streets, the Gracie Mansion had a dignity which put up the rentals all around East River Park.

In Katy's yard there was something rare within the confines of New York, a rosebush now nearly ready for its winter resting-time, and a few crimson button-

chrysanthemums which would bloom till after the snow fell. Nobody knew how they came there, for nobody knew nowadays that it was only a matter of two generations since at Hoorn's Hoek were the summer estates of the Astors, the Rhinelanders, the Schermerhorns, the Lawrences, the Rikkers, and the Primes, and that these were the last wilting springs from what had once been a Schermerhorn garden.

In fact, nobody knew nowadays that one of the reasons why Katy Bird and her mother held on to a small piece of land, which some one would surely have snatched from them had there been a way of doing it, was that there was no title to the property except what were known as squatter's rights. In the careless days when the Schermerhorns were neglecting their Hoorn's Hoek estate for something farther afield, an old colored servant had "filled in" an unnoticeable corner, half land and half water, and built thereon a little brick house. The old fellow being a favorite, the Schermerhorns only smiled, but the corner was omitted from the survey of their holdings. When those holdings passed into other hands the infinitesimal addition was not taken into account. By private arrangement it was handed from one "owner" to another, but legally it formed no part of the City of New York. It paid no taxes, since it was on no record and no plan. When the eyes of the law were turned on it, it was only to find a forlorn old woman and a lame girl, and so they looked away in pity. Had he searched the country, Owen thought, he could not have found a safer hiding-place.

For the time being a hiding-place was what he needed

most, but other considerations would very soon become pressing. He must have clothes; he must pay his board; he must earn a living. How? Except as an unskilled laborer, he saw no way. He didn't mind being an unskilled laborer, only that in such a position it would be hard to find the means of doing what he had spoken of to Katy as his life's work. That his heart was set on. Whatever he took to do must have Wrig Coppard as its ultimate objective.

Katy's mind was as sharp as her profile. "There's two things you've got to keep clear. The first is what you mean to do; the second, how you're going to do it. If you just wanted to kill this fellow, well, all you'd need would be to get a gun."

"No, I don't mean to kill him. I want other people to find out what he is."

"So there you are. That's not so easy."

"No, it's not so easy."

This was in the evening after supper, when, not to return to the attic so soon, he had gone again out into the fresh air. Luckily, the night was mild, with a south wind, and a moon across which ragged black clouds were dragging. In the vast scattering of lights it was hard to tell where earth ended and heaven began. From the black distance of the river, ferryboats moaned like behemoths with broken hearts.

Danny had gone to his "lodge," whatever that may have meant, and Mrs. Bird was cleaning up after the meal. Able to knit in the darkness as well as in the light, Katy had swung herself out to continue the talk interrupted in the afternoon. There was a low and

bulging retaining wall, built of logs by the negro who had filched the nook from both sea and land, and the logs, long water-soaked, were now giving way. As it was, however, the rough coping offered a seat above the rush of the dark tide, and a chance of privacy.

"I've seen a lot of boys who've come down the river," Katy took up again. "Danny's been three times up there, you know, and each time he's brought back a buddy. And most of them's had a bee in their bonnet like yours. They've all got it in for some one—till they see there's nothing in it."

"Whether or not there's anything in it must, I should think, depend on the case."

"That's right, too; only all cases are alike when you can't get at the fellow you have it in for."

"That's got to be proved—in this instance."

"What's not got to be proved is that it's going to give you a great deal of trouble."

"Well, I'm willing to take it."

"Yes, I know you are—now. But I wonder if you will be when you see that it's so much."

"But it mayn't be. I haven't yet begun."

"How much of your life would you be willing to give up to it?"

"I'd give up two or three years."

"Two or three years! Why, you don't expect to do anything in that time! Of course, if you went back to your folks that'd bring you nearer him, and so you might get your knife in. But from this distance it'll take ten, fifteen, twenty ——"

"But I hope I shan't stay at this distance."

"Then how would you cover the ground?"

"I don't know—as yet. I just begin to think I see a way."

"Like what?"

"I don't know," he declared again; "I'll have to find it before I can tell you."

"What you've got to consider is whether you won't do yourself more harm finding it than you'd do by letting the guy be."

"I don't care anything about the harm I do myself. If I didn't have that to live for I'd jump into the river—and be glad to know the whole thing was behind me."

"Yes; I know that feeling. Had it myself—more times than you might think. But then, you see, I've got mother and Danny on my mind. When Danny comes back from Bitterwell—I suppose he'll keep going there once in so often—I like him to know he's got a home."

"If I were to go home ——" he was beginning, moodily, and checked himself.

"You're fond o' your folks, ain't you?"

There was a long silence before he could bring himself to say: "I try not to think of them. When I do . . . My father let me go—up there—when he could have stopped it."

"But he'd saved you before, hadn't he?"

"He'd only saved me because the rich man's son was involved, and so the rich man wouldn't prosecute. When it was only me my father gave me up."

"So you've got it in for him, too."

"No; he's my father; there's my mother, too. I

wouldn't do them any harm. I just want to leave them alone."

"Won't they miss you?"

"Yes—I suppose—in a way. But I've a sister being married—to a swell—and it would only be a disgrace to them to have me around. A man who's been at the college is never just like any other man."

She allowed some time to pass before saying, "What about a job?"

He, too, allowed some time to pass before answering, "I'm wondering." After still another pause he added: "There's one man I think might take me on, but I don't know where he is. He's moved from the place he was in when I used to be in New York."

"What's his name?"

He considered the wisdom of disclosing it, but to this girl, so far from the circle of his old interests, it seemed harmless to let it out. "Epps."

"What's his first name?"

For the same reason he admitted that. "Tiddy."

A few minutes later she picked up her crutch and, without excuse or leave-taking, limped away into the night.

He himself continued to sit on the moldering log coping. It was all he could do but go to the attic. The house had but two downstairs rooms—the kitchen and a bedroom which Katy shared with her mother Up a short narrow stairs was the attic, running as far as the roof ran. In the middle of it Owen could stand erect; everywhere else he had to stoop. Under the eaves were the cots for Danny and himself, a crippled chair,

a single shaky washstand. The towel and the soap were shared between him and his room-mate. From some points of view his cell had meant luxury.

But it was not of discomfort he was thinking. His imagination roved homeward. It roved among all the people who had meant his life and who now had turned against him. That he took for granted. For a released jailbird human society had, and could have, no place. He might be allowed to earn food and lodging, but he must be kept out of sight. Had he gone back to his father's house, he would have embarrased them; and even if he had no other reason for disappearing, his pride would have kept him from intruding himself where he might have had a right, but no welcome.

And then there was Blandina and Wrig Coppard. Over that combination he smiled to himself bitterly. If Blandina married him she would find him out. There would be that compensation for his own sense of loss. That loss he had, of course, resigned himself to long ago. Blandina Vandertyl must now be thinking of him as the rest of the world thought of him. It must even be a humiliation to her to remember that they had once loved each other and that often and often she had lain in his arms. Well, she had lain in another man's since then, and now might lie in Wrig Coppard's. Gwennie's letters had told him so.

The family had always continued to write to him, though he had replied to none of them. On the subject of Blandina, Gwennie had been expansive, knowing no more than the other Hesketh knew of his own love for her. To old Peter Vandertyl, who was living then, he

had been a young scapegrace to whom the house was forbidden. Blandina and he had been obliged to keep their "engagement" a secret, but when he was arrested it broke itself off as a matter of course.

Worse than anything was the thought that while he was in Bitterwell there had been a war and he had not gone to it. It was not so much that he wanted to fight as that he wanted to do what other young men of his time had been doing. For the rest of his life he should have to make answer, if ever asked the question, "No, I didn't go to France, because I was in the state's prison." If his father and old man Coppard hadn't put him there . . . Of the many results of what they had done to him that was the most dishonoring.

Well, it was over now. Were it not for Wrig Coppard, he wouldn't return to it willingly even in thought. But life henceforth could only mean the planning of events in such a way as to show Wrig Coppard for what he was. He would not do so himself; that is, not directly. For one thing, he had no proof beyond his own word, and, since he had been at Bitterwell, Wrig's word would be taken before his. The thing must happen, seemingly of itself; but it couldn't happen unless he himself guided and steered and planned.

The sound of footsteps turning in from the alley on which the house was situated caused him to get up and go toward them. It was probably Danny returning from his lodge. But the shadowy swinging of another form told him who it was.

"There's a T. Tidmarsh Epps has a garadge at

twenty twenty-two New Netherlands Avenue," Katy informed him.

"That's the fellow," he acknowledged, in surprise.

She handed him a scrap of paper. "I've written his telephone number on that, in case you want to call him up."

He had grown so unused to the simple methods of the world that, as he followed her into the entry, he said to himself, "How the dickens did she find out that?"

With some difficulty, and considerable terror in braving the streets, Owen found his way to twenty twenty-two New Netherlands Avenue. It was a new garage, five stories high, with cement ramps all the way up and down. In the years in which he himself had been put away Tiddy Epps must have prospered. Any man who had done well while he had done so ill roused in Owen a sensation of envy mingled with despair. Recalling their relative positions when he had first known Tiddy Epps, he was tempted to turn away again.

Tiddy Epps was the son of the keeper of the livery stable from which Dr. and Mrs. Hesketh hired vehicles. Owen and Tiddy had first met as chubby urchins in a Sunday-school class. Later they had both sung in the choir of the cathedral. Later, when Wrig Coppard and Nod Hesketh had been up to their pranks, Tiddy was often admitted as a third in their adventures. When he was so, Mrs. Epps, the mother, who had aims of rising in the world, was proud of the association and spoke of it among her friends On Owen's going to one of the big "Church" schools the connection was broken

up; but the vicissitudes of his education ended, and Wrig a student at the near-by Columbia, the three pals drifted together once more. Motors displacing horses, the keeper of the livery stable wisely turned to a garage. The first was a small affair which he soon turned over to his son, who, after a year or two of varying fortunes, let the business to the promising young firm of Hesketh and Coppard. The Eppses, father and son, built on a larger scale, though Owen never knew where. His imprisonment having put them into the background of his memory, he only reverted to them now with a purpose. The purpose was, first, to be sure, the finding of a job; but he had another beyond that.

Entering the court of the garage, Owen discovered the proprietor standing there, doing nothing with an air of abstraction. Tiddy was the proprietor now, his father having died. A short, chunky, furtive-eyed fellow, whose style was meant to advertise prosperity, he viewed Owen's approach on foot with the aloofness he always displayed toward anyone who didn't come in a motor-car. It was a proof of the change which imprisonment had wrought that he recognized his old friend with a scared astonishment.

"Why—why—Nod! What the ——?" Only because his efforts to express himself were inadequate to the meeting was he so tactless as to add: "Never heard you was out."

Owen took the reference as to what he must expect. "Yes, I'm out, but not very long. Heard you'd lost your father. Sorry! Fine old man! Some one wrote me that you'd got married, too."

"Yes; two kids. Like to have you come up sometime and meet the wife. She likes to know all my old buddies."

"Thanks. We'll see about that later."

"Oh, she won't mind! Heard all about you. Swell mixer. And besides, you could come when there was nobody else there."

Owen thanked him again. "The fact is I looked in to ask you if you could give me a job of any kind. If you'd rather not—considering where I've come from—don't mind saying so."

Tiddy Epps felt his chin, ponderingly. "Oh, it isn't that, only—well, the fact is I haven't got a job that would suit you."

"Not even a washer's job?"

"Oh, but you wouldn't take that!"

"Pass me the sponge and see. Take anything."

Tiddy pondered further, his furtive eyes avoiding the plea in Owen's face. It was plain that he didn't like the idea of taking on an ex-convict, but neither did he like the idea of turning his back on an old friend. "W-well," he said, at last, "there's generally a washer's job. Can't keep 'em long enough to clean half a dozen cars. But you know how it'll be—wet all the time—and with winter comin' on, one cold follerin' on another ——"

"Yes, I know all about that. I'm not new to the business. But I'll take the job if the job'll take me."

Tiddy thought of another obstacle he might put in Owen's way: "It'll have to be night work. Can get plenty of fellas for the day."

Owen answered, heartily: "Night work all the same to me. Just give me a try-out."

So it was settled. Owen was to begin as a washer on the second evening following, at twenty-five dollars a week. "And say," he added to his thanks, "you needn't know anything about me except that my name is Jack Owen. I never knew you at all. Just came round and applied for the job, and you're giving me a chance. That's enough for the floorman as well as for the foreman. If we ever want to chew the rag—you and me—on the side—well, we'll find odd minutes when nobody else is round."

With this arrangement Tiddy Epps seemed relieved. To be caught between prudence on the one hand and loyalty on the other was, to a man rising in the world, a tricky situation. He would rather that Nod had not applied to him; but since he had applied he flattered himself that he had treated him as a gentleman should treat a fallen friend.

"Got to have a suit of overalls," Owen confided to Danny that evening. "Washer—New Netherlands Garage. Rubber apron and boots supplied. But where can I pick up the overalls?"

Danny looked both troubled and adoring. "Set you back ten dollars, Heskie ——" At the name both men glanced at Katy, who was pitching herself from table to sink and from sink to stove and apparently taking no notice. "I mean Jack," Danny corrected, haltingly. "Better leave it to me. Cheaper to me than they'd be to you, anyhow. Besides"—with his little eye cocked toward the ceiling he reflected—"besides, I think I know

of an old suit of my own that you might as well have as not. Give me by a buddy I used to have and who went up to the college for a life term and didn't want 'em no more. Too big for me, they was, but'd be just about your cut. Kind o' long and lank."

Sure enough, on his return from his painting on the following afternoon, Danny had the overalls. It was not a new suit, but it had been newly laundered. Spots of paint, faded by washing and yet indelible, combined with a few holes and rents to prove it second hand. In all that met the eye it was what Danny declared it to be, and since its owner would only bestow it as a mark of his affection, Owen was obliged to accept it. It disturbed him, however, to notice that in mending it Katy was not in a good humor, and that the old mother, while washing the dishes and putting them away, was even more glum than usual.

Ascribing this to Danny's refusal to take compensation, he seized an opportunity to slip to Katy a ten-dollar bill as the payment her brother wouldn't accept.

But she also refused it. "It isn't that," she declared, cryptically. "It isn't that at all."

A repetition of this incident took place a few weeks later when the weather had grown cold and Owen was suffering because he had no overcoat. As Tiddy Epps had foretold, he was wet all the time from his work, his throat was sore, a cough was threatening to settle on his chest. In the cross-town journey between New Netherlands Avenue and Hoorn's Hoek, in which there was no protection from warm and asphyxiating subways, he shivered like a tropical animal suddenly

brought northward. Long under-feeding and insufficiency of fresh air had reduced his power of resistance. In addition, his work was physically harder than he had ever been accustomed to. Though a washer was supposed to do only a washer's work, he was set to everything. When he was not cleaning a car he was polishing the fittings. When he was not polishing the fittings he was sweeping the ramps or the floors. Because the foreman recognized him as a swell who had gone wrong he was treated with less mercy than if he had been a ditch-digger or a coal-heaver. Swells who had gone wrong were fair game for foremen, floormen, and fellow-washers alike, just because they had been swells. Not that the type was a familiar one; but when it appeared it was generally recognized as having come out of prison. Nothing but prison could produce such demotion in the ranks. No one knew anything about this Jack Owen, and the fact that he didn't explain himself was a reason for assuming the worst.

Nevertheless, he was determined not to be ousted from the job, and so did it as well as it could be done. All the foremen under whom he worked were obliged to admit that as a washer they had never had his equal. Always ready with his sponge and bucket, he would be wetter in the dawn than the water with which he was sousing, hoarse as a steamer in a fog, coughing like a locomotive, but ready to begin on another car without a protest or complaint. Moreover, when other fellows tried to pick a fight with him he was conciliating and obliging. In an atmosphere that reeked with obscene profanity, to say nothing of a lack of reserve only

rivaled by that of naughty little boys in school, he was always gently spoken. In fact, it was his "talk," by which they meant his enunciation and his choice of words, which more than anything else kept his American companions from chumming up with him.

But he made his way. Men, after all, are rarely without a rough justice which recognizes merit. The very fact that a guy who had had the training of a gentleman never tried to evade the most grueling pieces of work called out the sporting spirit. "You gotta hand it to him," became a phrase, often translated into Italian, Finnish, or Czech equivalents, at each mention of his name, and hand it to him they did. But they couldn't hand him resistance to the wet and cold, or the inner heat, when the frost came and the snow began to fall, to do without an overcoat.

Out of his twenty-five dollars a week it had been all he could do as yet to pay his board, his washing, his carfares, and buy a few shirts, collars, and other necessities of wardrobe. His original forty dollars had gone for the purchase of another suit. Toward an overcoat he had now amassed a dollar and forty-seven cents. This was secreted in a knothole in a beam above his cot in Katy's unplastered attic. Nickel by nickel he was adding to the hoard, but at the rate at which he was progressing it would be spring before he had enough.

And then one bitter evening when Owen's teeth were chattering before he had started to his work, Danny appeared with a nice topcoat, lined, wadded, more or less threadbare, with a frayed fur collar, but quite

good enough for any working-man whose object is only to keep warm. A whole story accounted for the way in which it had come into his possession. Like the overalls, it had been given him. His first thought was, according to himself, to have Katy take it in, shorten it, and generally fit it to his form. But the difficulties in this attempt being insurmountable, it had then occurred to him that perhaps it would do for Heskie—no, he meant Jack. If so, he was welcome to the use of it. Being a present, it would still remain Danny's own, but he would lend it to Heskie—he meant Jack—till he had saved the dough to get one for himself. Owen was so innocent that he believed this tale, and wore the coat that evening on going to his work.

"I call it inhuman, Tiddy Epps, that's what I do."

Mrs. Tiddy Epps was giving Little Tid, the two-year-old, his bath. Little Tid, seated in the bathtub, played with a pair of celluloid swans. When he splashed he found that they performed wonders in the way of swimming. Chunky and squat like his father, he had his mother's blond hair and fair skin; but his eyes were already furtive, and perhaps a little sinister. His father stood in the bathroom door; his mother, covered up with a big apron, was stooping over the tub. Of Swedish extraction she was as pallid as a northern dawn, but active, decided, and right-minded. She had not married Tiddy Epps because she was in love with him, but because she was a manicure and he was in love with her. Marriage being the only future into which a manicure can graduate with honors, she had

taken her first chance. She and Tiddy lived in a small apartment, with a woman to come in by the day to do the cooking and the heavy work, when she was so inclined. Selma Petersen had found that as Selma Epps a large part of her wifely duty was in keeping her husband from mean tricks.

Tiddy had been boasting of all the work he was getting out of Owen Hesketh at a pay against which any other guy would kick. He did anything he was told to do. Two men, three men, wouldn't do as much. It was one of the advantages of hiring a former swell—even a swell who had been in Bitterwell—that he didn't know his rights.

Selma's voice was sharp and shrill. "If he don't know his rights, Tiddy Epps, you sure know yours; and yours ain't to play it low-down on a poor fellow that can't help himself. The foist thing you got to do . . . Little Tid, if you don't stand up so as I can soap you I'll fetch you one that'll ——" She softened her tone as the child scrambled to his feet so that she could lather him. . . . "The foist thing you got to do is to take him off'n night work. He ain't strong enough for it after the years he's been up there, and it don't become you as a gentleman."

Tiddy valued his wife's opinion first because he loved her to distraction, and then because as a manicure she had had opportunities of mixing with gentlemen, and so becoming familiar with their standards of behavior. On this last point especially he considered her word law.

Having meditated all that day on the nice points of conduct she had raised, he strolled out toward theater-

going time in the evening, to watch, as he often did, the arrival and departure of cars. As they rolled in, the uniformed checker stepped out of his sentry-box to pass each driver a ticket. Continuing its way, the car climbed the ascending white-railed ramps by involutions and convolutions like a train going over the St. Gotthard. Inversely, by a series of descending ramps, other cars came down, feeling the way cautiously over the cement spirals, appearing here, disappearing there, till at last they reached the street level. It was a pretty piece of engineering, and as neatly kept as a table set for dinner. No wonder Tiddy Epps was proud of it; no wonder he aspired to be a gentleman. With this aspiration in his heart he finally sauntered down to the basement, and found his way to the washing stand.

In overalls, rubber apron, and rubber boots, Jack Owen was scouring the sides of a big seven-seater. His dark curly head was bent; every now and then he raised his bared arm to brush the drops of sweat from his forehead. Though he knew well enough who had strolled up, he neither looked nor relaxed his efforts. Since there was no one within earshot, Tiddy could take the tone of old-time familiarity.

"'Lo, Nod! Just come on?"

Nod admitted that he had come on a half hour earlier.

"Like night work?"

He dipped the sponge in the bucket. "Fair."

"Better than—up there"—jocosely he nodded in a direction Owen could easily follow—"eh, what?"

"Some ways, yes."

"Not every way?"

Owen went on scrubbing. "Oh, good and bad in all places. Satisfied."

Tiddy's tone was genial, virtuous. "Like the fellows who work for me to be a little more than satisfied. Know that, don't you?"

Owen threw off, while continuing his labors: "Well, I am—a little more than satisfied."

"Fine! What makes you?"

"Job. Earning a living."

"Might earn a better livin' than this."

"This suits me—so long as it suits you."

"How'dj'a like to take up day work for a spell?"

Owen reflected. Day work was more agreeable than night work; but day work would mean sharing the attic with Danny, when as it was they could ride and tie. Day work would also mean his evenings either in the attic or the kitchen, as it was too cold in winter for the yard. For the theaters he had not the cash; for motion pictures he had not the inclination, having seen so many in Bitterwell; of the streets he had still some dread, and a real fear of being recognized. And then there was something else.

In going to his work at nightfall he was able to get his supper at a workmen's eating-place on the way, and his breakfast at the same place when he knocked off in the morning. Through the hour at which most people took a midday meal he was asleep. When he woke in the middle of the afternoon he was hungry, but not so hungry that he couldn't wait till supper time. He was thus able to take himself off the hands of Mrs. Bird and Katy as to meals, and save a few pennies by going

without lunch. And still there was something else. The decisive reason was this last one.

Without stopping the action of his hands, he glanced up at his boss. "Guess I'll leave things as they are, if it's all the same to you."

Tiddy's tone was slightly of offense. "All the same to me, of course. Only thought I might be doin' you a favor."

Throughout that night, as he worked at one thing or another, Owen reflected on Tiddy's suggestion that he might make a better living than in the New Netherlands Garage. He had some degree of intelligence, and a lesser degree of education. But though he had never studied with any kind of diligence, he did have a knack with his pen. Instinctively he used his mind, and for his thoughts he had a faculty of expression. It was not a trained faculty, but the habit of hearing English correctly spoken, and of so speaking it himself, enabled him to put sentences together in a way that appealed to a reader. He didn't know how he knew this; but he knew it and knew that he knew.

He might, therefore, try his hand at writing for the newspapers. There was a subject publicly under discussion at that very minute to which he felt able to make a contribution such as would only be possible to a man with a special kind of experience. That was the something else further which had decided him not to accept Tiddy Epps's suggestion. Going to bed about nine in the morning, and getting up about three, he had a good two hours and a half before turning out again. They were daytime hours during which it is natural to be

occupied, and he valued them. When in the morning he took off his apron, boots, and overalls, and washed himself at the washing-stand sink, he was glad to have made the answer he had given Tiddy Epps. With a good breakfast and a good sleep he would wake more enthusiastic than ever for his pen and paper.

In the middle of the afternoon he did that very thing. Crouched in the attic, by the light of a small oil-lamp, he reread what he had written during the previous days. After varied attempts at finding a title, he had settled on "The Convict's View of Justice" as covering his subject. "By an Ex-Convict" was his only statement as to authorship:

> Among men at liberty this is a theme on which only an ex-convict is qualified to speak. Only an ex-convict has that intimate knowledge of the convict frame of mind essential to expressing the convict point of view. That with regard to justice the convict point of view is important to the science of penology will scarcely be gainsaid. And yet it is rarely asked for, and when given uninvited, as in the present instance, it is rarely accorded weight. It is probably not too much to say that convict opinion is disregarded for the simple reason that it is convict opinion, and worthless on that account.

His argument here was to the effect that the convict attitude toward the punishment of prison had the same kind of value as that of the patient toward the doctor and his treatment. The doctor might have the learning and the skill, but the patient knew whether or not he was getting better. If he was getting better there was no criticism to be made; if he was not, he had the right to know the reason why. It might be that he was in-

curable, in which case his liberty to come and go must of course be circumscribed; if, on the other hand, he were curable, it was helping him but little to treat him as if he were not.

The convict's complaint against justice is that, except in the detail of the length of sentence, it makes no distinction between the vicious and habitual criminal and the man who may reasonably be called a non-vicious and non-criminal transgressor of the law. The same prison, the same cell, the same discipline, the same life-long disgrace await them all alike. Of these the life-long disgrace is the only consideration vitally important. The man who has done time in a great penitentiary is ruined beyond recovery. No condonation, no outward restoration, no making good on his part, will ever take the brand from his brow. He may be trusted, he may be allowed to fill big positions—as a matter of fact he never is—and still it will be whispered behind his back that he has been at Sing Sing, at Bitterwell, at San Mateo, or at Wormwood Scrubbs. In whatever is fundamental to social existence he is an Ishmael, an outcast from his father's house.

This was as far as he had gone. Having begun to read in high spirits, his face fell as he progressed. "Rotten!" he muttered, as he came to the end. "Rotten!" And yet when about to tear the pages up he relented and stayed his hand.

Katy Bird surprised her brother with a question. "What makes you call Mr. Owen Heskie, when his name is Jack?"

Danny, who, stripped to the waist, was washing at the kitchen sink after his day's work, lost ground by being flustered and answering, evasively: "So you've

got somethin' new to ferret out! Nose like a bloodhound pup."

"Well, what makes you?" Katy insisted. "It don't take a nose like a bloodhound pup to see that every time you say Heskie you try to take it back, and call him something you're not used to."

Danny spluttered with his face close to the water. "Don't take a nose to see anything." By the time he was drying his thin wiry arms, stretching each out in turn and rubbing it with a towel that had already seen duty for several days in succession, he had thought out a reply. "If you want to know so much, Heskie was just a nickname they give him up at the college, just like they called me Birdie."

"Yes, but Birdie was made up out of your real name. That's what they generally do, isn't it? When Billy White was up there they used to call him Whitey. If they gave Mr. Owen the nickname of Heskie, it was because his real name began with an H-e-s-k, wasn't it?"

"What's the matter with Owen for a real name?"

"Nothing's the matter with it, only it ain't his. Do you think I can't tell?"

Danny was pulling on a clean shirt. "Ah, you git along! You're so sharp you'll cut yourself."

After supper Katy disappeared as she had disappeared on the evening when Owen had wanted the address of Tiddy Epps. In the drug store at the corner, where she was a familiar figure, she pawed the telephone directory, looking for a name that began with the first four letters of Heskie. Herzel, Herzig, Herzog, Hescock, Heselton, Hesenius, Hesford, Heshion,

H-e-s-k-e-t-h! To make it more certain there was only one name of this spelling. Hesketh, Rev. Leolin Owen, with an address at Morningside Heights! She had now with regard to her lodger a degree of information which deepened an interest thrillingly deep already.

Putting two and two together, she worked out his name as John Owen Hesketh. Moreover, being in her capacity of seamstress an assiduous reader of the items of fashion in the newspapers, she knew that the beautiful Miss Gwendolen Hesketh, whose picture she had seen on a number of occasions since her engagement to Mr. Philip Appleworth, the son of the well-known multimillionaire, had been announced, was the sister of this homeless fellow she had taken under her roof, who was earning a living at twenty-five a week as washer in a garage. To be in touch with a series of such impressive social contrasts was the most romantic experience of her life.

But she kept her head. She also kept her counsel. To neither Danny nor Owen did she betray the fact of knowing a shade more than they wished to have her know. But she reflected. Reflection took her on the following Sunday morning to service in the new cathedral. Reasoning it out that if the Rev. Leolin Owen Hesketh—of all the names! she commented to herself—lived at Morningside Heights, he was probably connected with that institution, she took this method of seeing what he looked like. What he looked like, she thought, might give her a line on her subsequent course of action.

A church-goer of the wandering type, her interest in religion was at once serious and scornful. In itself she found something she wanted which, before she could seize it, was negatived by those who preached but didn't practice it. "That's all very fine," was the comment constantly in her mind as she listened to a sermon; during the singing of hymns and anthems the sardonic little smile never left her face. "If all this is true," she kept saying to herself, "the world wouldn't be the miserable thing it is, and my poor dad would not have had to go to the chair." That was something Katy never spoke of, but which lay in her heart as an unforgetable dishonor.

In her place in the great church she was not overawed, because her spirit was of the revolutionary type to which awe is an unknown emotion. Set on her purpose, she studied the folder giving the names of the staff which she found in the book-rack. Among them she read, just as she had expected, that of the Rev. L. O. Hesketh, Precentor. Not knowing what a Precentor was, but not being shy, she asked the lady beside her. The lady explained in a whisper that it was the clergyman who sang such portions of the priest's part of the service as were set to music. Finding her neighbor so polite, Katy ventured to ask further if she knew Dr. Hesketh. She replied that she couldn't say she knew him, but that she had spoken to him once or twice, by waiting for him after church. There had been things in the service about which she had wanted to ask questions.

To Katy this offered a lead. She could wait after church and speak to him; she could ask questions about something in the service. If other people did it she could do it, too, and not seem peculiar.

When the choir came in singing, she searched each face as Elisabeth searched for Tannhaüser's. But she searched successfully. Among the clergy who brought up the rear of the procession she had no hesitation as to which was Owen's father. The resemblance was as striking as any she had ever seen between a parent and a son, and as if that were not enough, there was the "romantic look" common to them both. All through the service she did her best to find a point as to which she could stop and inquire.

The vast congregation having largely dispersed, she found that a scattering remained to listen to the organ, which seemed to give an impromptu recital for the sake of joy and beauty. Limping forward, she stood near the foot of the chancel, watching for her chance. Then there happened the most wonderful thing she had ever imagined in the wildest of the many wild dreams she had dreamt since Owen had come to them. From a little group of ladies a tall slim figure detached itself and came toward her with a smile. Even had she never seen her picture in the Sunday supplements, Katy would have had no difficulty in recognizing Owen's sister. Beautifully dressed, a large black hat shading her small, exquisite, and romantic-looking features, she was to Katy's seamstress's eye the embodiment of fashion and loveliness.

"You're looking at the cathedral," said the low delicious voice. "I wonder if I could tell you anything about it? Of course it isn't finished yet. Most of the part where we're standing is only temporary ——"

"I was wondering," Katy interrupted, bluntly, "if I could speak to the clergyman who sang the service. There was something about it I didn't understand, and I thought I'd like to ask him."

The smile became even sweeter, the delicious voice more delicious. "He's my father. I know he'd love to explain to you. Here he is now. I'll go and fetch him."

As has been said already, Katy was not shy, nor was she ever at loss for words. Standing before Owen's father, tall, kindly, and as poetically Welsh as his name, she did so without embarrassment. She even put her question as if it expressed a difficulty really on her mind. "Whenever I'm in an Episcopal church I notice, sir, that you're always singing, 'Glory be to the Father.' What makes you do it so often?"

He, too, smiled, and, like his daughter's, it was Owen's smile to the life. "Wouldn't you like to sit down? Standing must tire you."

As he led the way into a pew she followed him, assuring him, however, that, though lame, she was strong, and made her way about as easily as anyone. She listened attentively as he told her that the psalms and some of the canticles had been written before God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had been fully perceived by men, and that the "Gloria," as it was commonly

called, was added to give a Christian tone to hymns more ancient than Christianity. With her mind at its most acute, Katy took this in, at the same time missing nothing of what was passing around her.

For example, the tall young lady had rejoined the little group from which she had come away. In the midst of this stood a plump little woman, with pretty features and complexion, not a bit of the Hesketh type, but whom Katy at once singled out as the mother of the girl. This guess was confirmed a few minutes later when the lady in question approached the pew in which she herself was sitting to say to the precentor: "You'll not forget, Leolin, that we're lunching with the Colfaxes." In saying this she scanned Katy's hatchet face and Katy scanned her charming one, on both sides with that look of quick summing-up which women give each other.

Having asked a few more questions, intelligently pertinent, and received a few more explanations, Katy thanked her kind instructor and limped away. But on the following Sunday she was back again. Again she lingered after most of the congregation had dispersed; again she made her way to the chancel steps and seemed lost in meditation. Though she spoke to no one and no one spoke to her, the tall young lady smiled and bowed, calling the attention of her mother, who turned and bowed likewise. On a third Sunday still she did the same thing, with variants on the same result, with the gently cynical remark, as she hitched her way down the aisle: "Now they've had a good look

at me. All these people get interested in anyone who seems to like coming to their church."

Thus having laid her foundation, she swung herself up, on an afternoon later in the week, when she had an hour off, to the house she had seen listed in the telephone directory, and boldly rang the bell.

"Is Mrs. Hesketh at home?"

Mrs. Hesketh being at home, Katy sent in her card. It was a business-like card, printed in ornamental type. "Miss Katy Bird. Dressmaking. Plain sewing. Goes out by the day." Her address, with a telephone number at which messages could be left for her, were neatly inserted in a corner.

She was shown into the "reception room," a slit at the side of the front door, reserved for those whom the experienced maid judged to be unequal to the grandeur of the drawing-room. To Katy it was all one, since she was actually within the portals of Owen's home. He knew this door; he had trodden this hallway; his picture in a group with his sister and a younger brother, dating back some fifteen years, stood on the mantelpiece. Though he had probably not much frequented this particular room, he knew its furnishings; at one time or another he had sat in its chairs; he must often have thought of it in his cell at Bitterwell. He must often be thinking of it now, in her own unplastered attic. It was a detail of that household to which his whole heart must turn whenever he heard the word home.

The plump pretty lady of the church, holding Katy's card between a thumb and forefinger, appeared on the threshold. "How do you do? I've seen you before, haven't I? Won't you sit down?"

Laying her crutch on the floor beside her, Katy

took the chair to which her hostess had motioned her before sitting down herself. She explained her errand without loss of time. Having seen in the papers that Miss Hesketh was going to be married, and thinking there might be extra work to do, she had come to ask if Mrs. Hesketh could employ her.

"I'm not in need," she hastened to add. "I've regular work four days a week, but I've two days to fill, and so I thought that perhaps ——"

"What made you think of coming to me? Did anybody send you?"

She replied that nobody had sent her, and that the idea had occurred to her only when Miss Hesketh had been so kind on seeing her in the cathedral, and Dr. Hesketh, too, when she had asked a few questions as to portions of the service she didn't understand. She was particular about the ladies whom she worked for. Just as there were people who didn't like her, so there were people whom she didn't like. Had she been willing to go to anyone and everyone she could have filled her two days long ago; but she tried to make her work a pleasure to herself, and so had kept them free. But if Mrs. Hesketh couldn't use her . . .

"Have you any references?"

She produced a bundle of letters, at which Mrs. Hesketh glanced, finding among the signatories no one whom she recognized. "I thought you mightn't know them," Katy continued, earnestly, "and that perhaps my best reference would be my work. So I brought these samples in case you might like to look at them."

With the eyes of an economist as well as of a connoisseur Mrs. Hesketh examined the specimens Katy laid before her. "Is this your own hemstitching?" she inquired at last.

"Yes, madam, my own."

"What do you ask a day?"

Katy named her price.

"Excuse me a minute, will you? I'd like to show them to my daughter."

Even before Miss Hesketh floated in with her warm smile and gracious recognition Katy knew that her point had been gained. She was going to work for Owen's mother. She would know his family; as a seamstress always does, she would hear their talk; their primary opinions she would learn in the maids' dining-room. Already she had two clients, the one the wife of a plumber, the other that of a traveling salesman, who found her a confidante all the safer for being out of their own sphere. Arguing that there cannot be much difference in essence between a plumber's wife and a precentor's, she considered it possible that before many weeks were ended Owen's mother might be pouring out her sorrows over a bit of stitching in much the same way as Mrs. Pritty or Mrs. Pegram.

But not till she took her second luncheon in the kitchen with the maids did Katy get what she had come in search of, the family attitude toward the scapegrace son. "I can't do anything," she said to herself, "till I know whether or not they want him home at all." As to that, neither Mrs. Hesketh nor

Miss Gwendolen, though they had sat with her now and then and helped her, had given her any light. To a scapegrace son they had made no reference. So the first day had been nothing but an introduction.

It had, however, done one thing; it had put Katy on a good footing with the maids. She knew already that for a seamstress as for a trained nurse, to stand well with the maids is the secret of working pleasantly in somebody else's house. To give no trouble, to tidy up after herself before she went home, to fall in with the ways of the household, to be a good mixer and join in the chatter at table, this, in her judgment, was the line of least resistance. Miss Gwendolen had brought up the subject by asking her where she would like her midday meal. The maids took theirs in the kitchen; they had a nice little dining-room, but preferred to keep it as a snuggery in which to receive their friends. Katy could have her lunch served there, or she could have a tray brought up to the sewing-room. Miss Dilley, who had worked for them last, had had the tray, but . . . Katy cut the matter short by suggesting that she should go to the kitchen, where she always ate at home. Miss Gwendolen laughed and said that that would perhaps be the simplest thing all round.

In the kitchen Katy commended herself by enjoying the food placed before her, by helping herself whenever she could do so without seeming to take liberties, and by insisting on washing her own dishes before she went upstairs. By the time she was ready to go the cook, a scrawny Scotch Presbyterian, not easy to

please as a rule, had given her the nickname of Katy-did, which she accepted good-naturedly. On her return a week later she was welcomed as an old friend.

In her betwixt-and-between position in other people's houses Katy had often marveled at the curious gulf between the kitchen and the dining-room. In rare cases it was bridged by a little sympathy; but mostly the attitude, on the part of the kitchen, at any rate, was detached or hostile or even malevolent. Here perhaps the harshest thing that could be said was that it was critical and analytical. They could all be classed as "old servants." Anna, the Scotch cook, had held her place for sixteen years; Nora, the chambermaid, a pert and pretty Irish girl from the County Limerick, had been seven years in hers; Effie, a Scotch-Canadian from Prince Edward Island, had been parlor maid for ten years. Yet none of them was in any sense identified with the Hesketh family and its fortunes. The place was good; the wages were liberal; though Mrs. Hesketh was "near" as to what was served in the dining-room, she knew better than to "scrimp the help." These were the chief considerations.

The meal to which Katy was invited to sit down on her second day consisted of succulent pork chops, mashed potatoes, condiments to choice, and apple pie, all among her favorite dishes. Eating the best of food at somebody else's expense, as she did on the days she "went out," was an experience that never lost its novelty. To have three meals a day served up to you like that, a comfortable room, a laundry in which to wash your own clothes, high wages daily grow-

ing higher, all, as she called it, pure velvet, was an existence so idyllic that she often wondered why every woman in America who had to earn a living was not in domestic service. Strong tea—of which she now drained three large cups, Nora and Effie drinking four—always on the stove, with bread, butter, and frosted cake *à discrétion*, were but details in this life of luxury.

Feeling by this time that Katy was safe, all three women discussed the family, as ladies and gentlemen in waiting at a court discuss their sovereigns. From one and another she gleaned that besides the father, mother, and Miss Gwennie there was a younger son. Lloyd was his name, which had also been his mother's maiden name. The mother was an American; the father an Englishman, or, as he himself insisted, a Welshman, which explained his odd name. But this Lloyd! During the war he had lost an eye, and had now a glass one in its place, which gave him a funny squinting look. Like all the family, he was good-looking, though the least so among them.

"The feyther's the beauty," declared Anna, the cook, "and beauty's aye been a snare to a meenister. The women won't let him alone. He, puir feckless body that he is, thinks it's religion sends them after him, when all they wants is another look. They'll bring him their sorrows and their doots; but they'll not be convinced in the one nor consoled in the other, hopin' that he'll fix another day for seein' them."

Nora was less interested in the parent than in the son. "Aw, but he's the quare one. Some sort o' young professor he is in the college over forninst. He t'aches

metals and minerals. His room is that full of shiny rocks and stones that you'd think he was pavin' a road. Quarts he calls thim; but I niver see no quart like that in Oireland, and there's many a quart bottle there."

This being taken as a screamer, they all screamed, Katy with the rest. But Katy screamed from good policy. It was part of the rôle of a good mixer. In general, her laugh—on the rare occasions when she did laugh—was piercing and shrill, the laugh of a person in pain, less like a scream than the cry of a bird whose nest has just been robbed.

Then there was another son. Did Katy ever hear about him? "Aw," came from Nora, "that sure was somethin' awful. Nice-lookin' fella, too. Always had a kind word, even for the cat. And what do you think he done? Forged a check for a vast sum of money that pretty near ruined an ould friend of his father's. What do you think o' that, now? And him a fella you'd 'a' trusted with your soul. Aw, but the day he wint to jail! That sure was some day! If we'd been keenin' for the dead it couldn't 'a' been more sorrowful."

Katy hazarded the opinion that it must have eased things for the doctor and Mrs. Hesketh to have such stanch friends in the kitchen end of the house.

"Sure it was such a mournful house that I didn't want to stop in it at all, at all. I'd 'a' quit right there and thin, on'y Father Doody he told me that when payple was in trouble wasn't the time to desert thim, and so I had to stay on. It was different with Anna,

who'd been here so long; and Effie there hasn't got a heart in her body—thim Canadians don't have, by what I've heard tell. But me! Sure I was nothin' to thim, nor they to me, Father Doody or no Father Doody."

Pouring her third cup of tea, Anna felt it time to put her own testimony in. "I ken verra weel that the morn the laddie was to have come home the feyther was up before daylight, prayin' on his knees for him. He's a great hand for prayin' when the meeschief's been done, the puir soft body. If it was me I'd 'a' dealt wi' the Lord before it had begun, and besought him not to tempt a feeble creature overmuch, and so 'a' saved him in the fairst place. It's no for me, after cookin' his meals for saxteen years, to say onything against him; but if it was ma duty to confess it, wild horses would na keep me from sayin' that for a meenister he's a verra wor-rldly man, for a' he's so uridite and clever."

Effie had the acidulated singing intonation, something like a Swede's, of one whose first language had been Gaelic. In repose a solid, stolid woman in the thirties, she took on in narration the histrionic quality inherited from an ancestry with plenty of drama in their loves and lives. The minute she spoke her eyes grew golden, like leaden pools smitten by a shaft of sunlight. "I've seen him when he was a man turned to a pillar of stone whateffer."

With this introduction Effie had the floor. Not only her face, but her form became transfigured in the spirit caught from legend-reciting generations. "Before

breakfast Mrs. Hesketh says to me, 'Effie,' she says, 'put on an extra plate the morn, for I'm lookin' for ma son home whateffer.' Mr. Lloyd was the fairst to come doon, pickin' up the newspaper—like that—and tryin' to seem as if nothin' was to happen. But as I laid the table I could see all the time that he was listenin' for the door bell—like that. Then Mrs. Hesketh, she come back, white as the tablecloth whateffer. 'Lloyd,' says she, 'this is the seventh of October.' 'All right, mither,' says he. 'Ma brither's comin' home and we'll try to treat him decent, never fear.' With that Miss Gwennie she come doon, as pretty in her rose-colored négligée—like that—that you'd never 'a' thought it was a day o' lamentation. 'Gwennie,' her mither says, says she, 'to-day is the seventh of October.' 'I know it well, mamma,' says Gwennie. "My brither's comin' home, and it's a right lovin' welcome we'll give him whateffer."

Last of all the father had descended, with such a glistening look—the expression was Effie's—that anyone could see he had been praying. If at a time of so much emotion he could be spoken of as in high spirits, that would have been the word. To relax the tensity of the others, he asked Lloyd what was in the morning paper, and Gwennie who had been the guests at the dinner which she had attended on the previous evening. Effie could see that he was talking against time, and that his heart was listening, though his lips uttered words.

"All of a sudden there was a peal at the door bell which pretty near pulled the hoose doon. All four of

them jumped to their feet—like that. Mrs. Hesketh she was for rushin' to the door to meet her fairst-bor-rn, but Lloyd he stretched out his ar-rm—like that—and pressed her back. 'No, mither,' he says; 'let me go. It'll be easier for him,' says he, 'if he sees me first.' "

Effie then acted out the way in which they all stood listening, still, strained. They heard Lloyd's steps as he went down the hallway. They heard the opening of the door. They heard the murmur of men's voices. They heard the closing of the door. They heard footsteps coming back along the hall. Lloyd appeared on the threshold with his hands full. It was only the postman.

The question on Katy's lips was a test one. "Were they sorry?"

"Sorry?" Effie made a spring that was itself an exclamation, and a sour little Hieland sound of scorn that anyone should ask her that. "Sorry? I should say! I told you already that the puir old man was like a body turned to stone. Miss Gwennie she begun to greet, but she had to stop her tears to go and help her mither, who fell back into a kind o' faintin' fit. Lloyd was the only one who sat doon again and finished his breakfast whateffer."

Each of the other two women had something to add as to the rest of that dreadful day. The poor old man had watched at one window; his wife at another. Miss Gwennie gave up all her engagements to stay at home and wait. When Lloyd came back from the college his first question, called out before he had shut the door behind him, was, "Has he come?" Had it not

been for the fuss about the wedding, which was to take place after Easter, there could not have been a sadder home in New York.

On that same seventh of October old William Coppard woke before daylight, just like, according to Anna, the cook, that puir feckless body, Owen's father. Switching on the light, he looked at the time. "They'll just be stirring in their cells up there. . . . In another hour or so I suppose he'll be out. . . . Well, that'll be off my mind . . . especially if I can carry out my plan. . . . Wish to God I didn't have this feeling about Wrig."

Trying to go to sleep again, he found himself more wide awake than ever. At seventy, a man once roused is roused for the day. Bed was impossible. Getting up, he wrapped himself in a dressing-gown. The air being sharp, he closed the window and sat down beside it. Outside there was just enough light to show the trees of the Park half swallowed in a ghostly mist. Up and down Fifth Avenue the early vehicles were creaking as if still half asleep.

"Perhaps they're coming for him now. . . . Believe they fit 'em out with a new suit of clothes . . . and pay for the ticket to New York. . . . If Wrig did have anything to do with it . . . But that couldn't be. . . . Been over the ground too often. . . . Besides, I'd have seen it in his face. . . . And yet that word on the check . . . "

He switched on the light again. At his desk he manipulated two small drawers in such a way that they

slipped from their places, disclosing a secret hiding-place, from which he took a key. Having pushed the head of his bed to one side, he opened a small safe and drew forth an envelope. He relocked the safe, pushed back his bed to its usual position, replaced the key in its secret drawer, put out the light, and sat down again by the window. The envelope he held unopened in his hand, as he looked out and mused.

But the sound of his movements and the switching on and off of electricity had disturbed his wife. Entering the room silently, she came and sat down near him. A large dim figure in the darkness, she had the decisive motions, mannerisms, and tones of voice of one to whom a mind of her own has long been conceded. Though her husband was not afraid of her, he treated her with respect, since as Miss Sarah Wrigley her position in New York had been better than his own and her fortune larger. Indeed, as she was accustomed to remind him, he owed everything to her, if by everything you meant rise in the world and social recognition.

"Couldn't you sleep?"

"Slep' very well till half past five. Since then been restless. 'Membered that it was the seventh of October ——"

"But how many times have I told you, William, to keep that out of your mind? Life is governed by the thoughts we don't hold as much as by those we do. So long as you persist in going back over things for which you've no responsibility ——"

"But that's just what I feel I have."

"Then you must allow me to contradict you. When the law took the matter out of your hands ——"

"It was me who appealed to the law. Could have hushed the thing up, like I did the other time."

"And you saw what you got by that. A repetition of the same offense."

"N-not exactly that. The first time it sure was Wrig ——"

"Again you must allow me to contradict you. Wrig was younger ——"

"By less than a year."

"And was led astray."

"But he wrote the word—with his own hand—a hand so danged like mine that when I owned to it no bank clerk could contradic' me."

"That's ancient history. Whatever Wrig's peccadilloes, he wiped them out by his noble conduct in the war. Now he's doing splendidly. If he marries Blandina Frankland ——"

"Think she'll take him?"

"I'm very nearly sure of it—as sure as you can be about anyone who's got so many men to choose from."

"Wasn't there something between her and Nod Hesketh?"

"Ancient history again! Why drag these poor ghosts from their graves? I know this much for a fact, that when he was sentenced Blandina was so outraged she wouldn't let the affair be mentioned in her presence."

"Still, she might have cared for him on the side ——"

"If she had, do you suppose she'd have married Wally Frankland the next year?"

"That was only because he was going to the war."

"All the same, she married him, and if he hadn't been shot she'd be married to him still."

"Seems to have got over it pretty quick, if she's thinking already about Wrig."

"She's thinking about half a dozen. Wrig is only in the running, but he seems to be the favorite."

By the time he had gone down to breakfast his son was leaving the breakfast-room. The house was so spacious that they breakfasted in one room and lunched and dined in another. Mrs. Coppard took her morning meal upstairs. Father and son grunted a greeting as they passed.

Having run through his letters and glanced at the headlines of the paper, he drew from the envelope he had taken from the safe the bluish-pink slip it contained. For perhaps the ten-thousandth time in the years since he had written all but the most important word he reëxamined it. For perhaps the ten-thousandth time since it had first been placed before him he groaned to himself: "God! If that word didn't look so much like the same word in the other check! . . . If only I hadn't destroyed that other check. . . . And yet if I hadn't I might have had to be sure. . . . And now there's a doubt. . . . Better the doubt. . . ." And then it came over him with the rush of humiliation to which custom had never rendered him immune that a doubt would be the best he could have for all the rest of his life.

A big, ungainly man, he sat at the table awkwardly, and ate with slovenly carelessness. In that dainty little room, his wife's creation, with its French paneling and single charming water-color—a meadow, a brook, and a dairy-maid by Birket Foster, over the fireplace in which there burned a crackling blaze—he seemed as incongruous as a harlequin in church. What had once been a shock of dark hair was now thinned and grizzled. Thinned and grizzled were also the beard, trimmed to a point, and the mustache. His steel-blue eyes, which had once been keen, were now blurred and downcast. His friends said that the going of his son to the war—from which, to be sure, he had returned without a scratch—had aged him, but his wife and a few intimates guessed it was something else.

Hearing Wrig go downstairs to leave the house, he called to him. Wrig came to the threshold. As the son of large-built parents, it was no more than what you would expect that he should be large built too. He was Herculean. Big broad features, big broad shoulders, legs like those of a wrestler, hands that could have choked a bull, were so proportionately put together as to make him an imposing figure of a man. A voice so deep that it might have rattled the Chi'en-lung vases on the mantelpiece was so modulated that it reached the ear as a thrilling bass. It was the casing for a noble soul, and only the crafty little eyes and a hard, straight, thin-lipped mouth under a tiny tooth-brush mustache, made you doubtful about the character that went with this massive frame.

The older man went on with his breakfast as he

spoke in a tone he tried to make matter-of-fact. "'Member, Wrig, I suppose, that this is the seventh of October?"

Wrig squared his great bulk. "I know it's the seventh of October. But why should I remember it?"

"Because it's the day on which something's to happen that concerns us pretty close."

"Is it? What?"

"Nod Hesketh's coming home."

"Oh!" Wrig pronounced the syllable in a vibrant tone of distaste. "Is he? Well, I want you to know, dad, that that doesn't concern me in any way whatever."

"Very well, then. Leave you out. Put it that it only concerns me."

"I don't see how it concerns you ——"

"If I do, suppose you'll be willin' to let it go at that. Only speak to you about it because there's something I want you to do for me."

"Oh, if it's that ——"

The father bent his head, sipping his coffee with a long noisy suction. "I want you to hunt up Nod Hesketh ——"

Wrig started back with a violence that shook the floor beneath him. "*Me!* Hunt Nod Hesketh *up?*"

The other continued to eat noisily, with his head bent. "I want you to hunt him up and tell him I'd like to see him. Ask him if he won't come over here—for a little chin."

"Father, have you gone crazy?" Wrig advanced

toward the table. "Because if you have I'll get a doctor to come, but not ——"

"Refuse?"

"Sorry, but I must."

"Why?" At last he raised his eyes, but only beneath his brows and scarcely lifting his head. "Any reason to be afraid of him?"

The blood surged into Wrig's face. "Have you any reason to insult me, dad?"

William Coppard got up from his chair, slipping out as he did so the check from beneath the pile of letters. Though like so many other checks, Wrig seemed to recognize it by some hidden mark, and backed away from it.

"You're not ——" he began to stammer.

"Going to put you through the third degree again? Only this once, Wrig. If you'll swear to me you never had anything to do with it ——"

"But I've sworn that to you already."

"Yes, but—but—but that word"—he pointed to the forged *hundred*—"is so dang like the one you *did* write ——"

Wrig was ready with an answer he had only recently thought out. "Of course it's like it, since both are imitations of your own handwriting. How could they be unlike?"

The father's face cleared as weather clears. For a long minute the new idea worked in his mind like overwhelming good news. "Why, of course!" It was a new discovery. "That's the explanation of the whole dang thing! Why didn't I ever think of it?" With

a sudden pang of remorseful affection he threw his arm over his son's shoulder. "Wrig, old boy, you've heard the last of this. Just have to go easy with me till I get hold of this new . . . I've been so worried over . . . But—there! That's the end of it." He tossed the check into the fire, where the record of so much trouble curled up in a tiny tongue of flame. "Now be off to your office—and we'll never speak of it again."

"Miss Morgan wants me to go over and help her in her reconstruction work. That's really what I want to talk to you about. I thought you might be able to advise me."

Wrig's reply was preceded by a laugh like the first deep note of "Das Rheingold." "What's the use of my advising you when you'll do what you want to do, anyhow?"

Whatever attraction Blandina found in him was first of all in this thrilling diapason. The only voice she had ever heard like it was that of a priest in the Russian church in Paris. It rumbled like dying thunder; it awed and moved her. If the rest of Wrigley Coppard were only in accordance with his build and his bass . . . but of that she wasn't sure. She wasn't sure to the contrary, either. There was only something about him which puzzled her. There were times when it seemed impossible that anyone outwardly so big and generous could be so small within; but then there were other times when he . . . And yet if he puzzled her there was a fascination in the bewilderment, and the love of fascination was her weak spot.

If in the fascination there was also the tang of risk, as there was in this case, she liked it the better.

At a first glance she impressed you as a woman who could have had within reason anything she wanted. A widow, young, wealthy, independent, she was the American interpretation of the Molière Célimène. Admirably poised, secure in her position, finished to the finger tips, she softened these aggressive advantages with a sweet and ready smile of which the faint mockery kept it from becoming saccharine. Like summer lightning her gayety played on the surface of things, but only on the surface. Below the surface you divined that she was serious, though there was rarely anything to show it. It was more than an intimate friend who was ever admitted behind the summer lightning's vivid touch-and-go. Even when poor Wally Frankland was killed the closest were not allowed to know how deeply she mourned him, or whether she mourned him or not. With an air of being open and frank, there was never anyone who kept her real self behind lock and key more secretively.

Her women friends were annoyed by this, and her men friends tantalized. You never knew quite where you stood with her. Women might guess it from her loyalty, but men couldn't guess it at all. For aught of distinction she made between them they might have been Penelope's suitors eating their feasts of goat's stomach. She was "nice" to every one of them; but if toward any she betrayed a shade of favor, and that was doubtful, it was toward Wrigley Coppard.

She had gone so far as to scribble him, on the pre-

vious evening, a line which he had received by that morning's post. "If you have nothing better to do tomorrow afternoon—the 7th—look in and have a cup of tea with me.—Blandina." This she had never done before, at least with him, and if he had not been dogged all day by the thought of Nod Hesketh, he could have mentally been swimming in the blue.

It surely wasn't possible, he argued to himself, that she could have remembered—that she could even have known—the significance of the date. And yet if his father had kept it in his mind, why not she in hers? Nod had told him once in confidence that he and Blandina Vandertyl were "engaged," but that was when they were little more than boy and girl. After the trial she wouldn't so much as speak of him, and that Wrig had taken as conclusive. Now, on this confounded 7th of October, with her note in his pocket, he asked himself, conclusive—as to what? The question forced itself in on all his thoughts, just as he was trying to solve in a truly broker-like manner the problem of the Oakfield Light and Power bonds.

But here in her lovely pastel-colored drawing-room in Sutton Place she gave no sign of anything sinister whatever. She was as "nice" as usual. In view of the fact that she had specially asked him to come she was even "nicer." Exquisite in shades of blue and mauve, she was the kind of well-nourished little creature, with dimpling softnesses, whose special appeal is to big men. Not that she had any snuggling qualities. On the contrary, she was erect and self-sufficient. Amiable and apparently light-hearted, she had an

indefinable ability for keeping people at a distance. As if to add emphasis to this formality she wore a hat.

In the same spirit, though she had asked him to come as if she had something on her mind, she kept, while giving him his tea, to the topics of the hour. They discussed President Wilson's appeal for the League of Nations, Morris Gest's spectacular "Mecca," the *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*. It was *à propos* of this that she told him of her intention to rebuild the village of Bourg-la-Comtesse, near which Wally Frankland had been killed, and so came to Miss Morgan's suggestion that she should take part in the work of reconstruction.

Replying to his reply, she tossed off: "I don't know that doing in the long run what I want to do is any obstacle to my asking your advice. But if you don't care to give it ——"

"I don't care to give it, just to have you turn it down. When I offer a counsel I like to see it followed."

"Oh, do you? I'm just the other way. I'm ready to advise anyone; but if I thought they'd do as I said, I should be terrified."

"If you merely want to know what I think ——"

"Yes, that'll do, thank you."

"Well, then, I should say, 'Stay at home.' I don't believe you've got the equipment ——"

"You mean the brains. I quite agree with you. It's what I said to Miss Morgan."

"No, I don't mean the brains. I mean the physique. You still have to rough it in that part of France ——"

"A little roughing it might be a novelty. And be-

sides, if I don't go, what on earth is there for me to do here?"

"If you only wanted something to do—you could marry me."

"So you've given me to understand; but I could marry two or three other people, too. When I speak of something to do I mean something interesting."

"But you don't know how interesting marrying me would be."

"Not by experience, no; but I don't altogether lack imagination."

"Does that mean that you think it would be dull? Because if it does ——"

Holding it daintily between thumb and finger, she nibbled at a sablé. "Isn't it always dull when you live in a society made up entirely of rich business men? Among business men of course I include bankers, lawyers, and all the *canaille* of millionaires who make America notorious. If I were to marry again I'd have to marry one of them, and the mere idea makes me shudder."

Taking this as a personal snub, he said, with a growl like a lion's, but keeping the smile on his lips, "What makes your choice so limited?"

"Because I don't know any others. In what we call our society there are no others to know."

"What about sportsmen?"

"Oh, our sportsmen are only rich business men dressed in another kind of clothes. It's awfully monotonous. If one's *going* to take the trouble to get

married—again!—one might really like a whiff of something different."

"Well, I'd be different. It's true I'm a business man; but no one can accuse me of being rich."

"But you will be. Besides, it isn't the riches I object to, nor yet the business man. It's the fact that here in New York—at least the New York that I'm cooped up in—there's no variety. It's rich business man or nothing." Springing to her feet, she led him to the window. "Now there's a New York I should love to find my way into; but it does me no more good than if I were a canary swinging in a cage."

It was probably for just this outlook that the rich people of New York—or some of them who found themselves foot loose—driven from pillar to post in search of homes, had settled in the noisy picturesqueness of Sutton Place. Accustomed to gazing on brick and stone and traffic, they found the eddied swirling of these waters, oily, morose, and gray, a relief not only to the eye, but to the mind. Black craft, suggestive and mysterious, slid along the current on errands out in the unknown. Over in Astoria, buildings, factory chimneys, with here and there a tower or a spire, showed vaguely through the clouds of smoky mist. To the north a colossal bridge hung high against the sky, while over it a roar subdued and ceaseless sounded like the hum of the earth's revolution in space. To the south was distance, adventure, the port, the bay, the ocean. In the dim vastness there was swiftness, fierceness, energy, something primitive and vital. To the pastel subtleties of Blandina Frankland's

drawing-room there could have been no more barbaric contrast, and yet between them she herself felt an obscure affinity.

"That's real," she said, in that light tone in which you might or might not have detected a blend of wistfulness. "I'm not."

"There's nothing so varied as reality," he argued. "That can be real, and you can be real, too."

"Yes, of course; only I'm artificial. I'm a well-off woman imprisoned in her wealth. I've so few duties that I can perform them in five minutes of a morning, and when they're done I'm done till they come round again next day. For the whole of the twenty-four hours—except for those five minutes—I've nothing to do but kill time. Why shouldn't I envy the men and women out there"—she flipped her hand toward the water and beyond it—"who must work or starve?"

This offering a new theme for discussion, they talked in their half-bantering way till he felt that he was straining the laws of hospitality. When in the October dusk lights began to sprinkle the river and the banks on the other side, he felt obliged to take his leave. He no longer urged his suit, since he feared he had done that a little too insistently for six or seven months. Widowhood seeming to sit upon her lightly, he had begun early; and though she had not resented this liberty, she had put him off with easy turns of phrase as she had done that afternoon. He shook hands, therefore, as an ordinary visitor, and thanked her for letting him come. If nothing was gained,

nothing was lost; and when nothing was lost that was a gain in itself.

This was his silent summing up as he closed the door of the apartment and rang for the lift. But the door reopened and she appeared again. Instinctively he knew that whatever she was going to say would reveal the motive for her invitation.

"Oh, by the way! I nearly forgot. Did you know that our old friend, Nod Hesketh—was to—to come home today? I just thought I'd ask you, the first time you run into him, to tell him to come and see me."

He stood aghast and angry. So that was the reason for all this sweet cajolery! The note from the bottom of the Rhine was heard before he spoke again.

"But suppose I don't—run into him?"

Her smile was as bland as ever. "Oh, then I'll get some one else to take my message—or write to him myself. Good-by! So many thanks for coming. I've enjoyed seeing you immensely."

The lift came up. She closed the door behind her.

The rooms had so emptied themselves that Blandina was able at last to get Gwennie Hesketh to herself. It was what she had come for. Somehow she had lost her taste for the ordinary New York round. For the last two years, ever since she had emerged from the retirement made necessary by her widowhood, she had been somewhat assiduous in pursuing it. She had gone everywhere—everywhere, that was to say, within the limitations of her circle. The circle was large, in that it included all that was left of the old guard which had

had Mrs. Astor for its center, together with the accretions added by the twentieth century and the war. So large, indeed, had it become, that circle, with its suggestions of neatness and completeness, was no longer a symbol of its form. If you wanted a circular figure for it now it might rather be that of the jellyfish, amorphous, without articulation, expanding here, contracting there, with long feelers, scratchy and infectious, out in all directions.

And yet, however much it changed, it was always the same thing. The same people meeting in the same houses talking about the same subjects. The women she met at lunches were all variants on the wife of the rich business man. A sprinkling of men turned up at teas, and of course you had them for dinner. But even then the only relief from the business atmosphere was in the obvious topics of the hour. She had discussed President Wilson's appeal for the League of Nations, Morris Gest's "Mecca" and the *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, till she was exhausted on the themes. What she did want to talk about she didn't know. Whom she wanted to meet she didn't know. All she was sure of was her longing for something different, something, as she herself expressed it, with a tang to it, and the sharpness of adventure.

That other women felt the same she was aware. She was aware, too, that the dissatisfaction was ascribed by wise people to the war. She didn't think it was the war in her case, for the war—she was ashamed to own it to herself and never did to anybody else—the war had seemed to her stupid and incomprehensible. She had

lost a husband in it; she had tried, for the sake of appearances, to "do her bit," as the phrase went; but it had never thrilled or absorbed her, and still less did it unsettle her. She was unsettled, it was true; but that, she was sure, was chiefly due to the vacuous life to which as a rich woman she seemed to be condemned.

Such twinges of conscience as she suffered were with regard to her husband. She knew perfectly well that she shouldn't have married him. She had married him because he was a charming fellow, wild to marry her, and just at that moment she was so distraught that she would have done anything to get away from conditions as they had been. If he hadn't been killed in the war she didn't know what would have become of her; for charming fellow as he was, he was also one of those kindly, gentle, fatuous men whom it would have been misery to live with. Even before he was killed she had sometimes said to herself that it was better to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever than with a sweet, innocuous mother's boy who wouldn't hurt a fly. Wicked as it was, and wholly unavowable as she tried to keep it to her upper consciousness, she thanked the war as the means of her escape.

It was escape, but, as she now began to feel, escape into a vacuum, since it was into a world which offered her nothing for which she craved. How little there was in it which she craved came over her again on receiving Mrs. Appleworth's card. Sunday afternoon from five to seven! She knew in advance who would compose the party—the Jarrotts, the Endsleighs, the Poles, the Wrigleys, the Wrens, the Colfaxes—all the rank and

file—the tag, rag, and bobtail, she called it impatiently —of that Episcopalianism to which she herself belonged. She had often noticed that if in the jellyfish there were lines of cleavage, they were chiefly along those of church affiliation. The Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Catholics, the Dutch Reformed—this was as far as her personal observation took her—flocked in the main together. She supposed that the members of other churches did the same. True, they spilled over among one another, so that you often met Catholics in Anglican houses, and Dutch Reformed in Catholic houses, and so on, and so on, but the broad divisions were maintained.

As far as she thought of it she had no objection to this variety. The reunion of Christendom did not interest her at all. She liked the occasional diversion of a wedding or a funeral in a Dutch Reformed or Roman church, coming back to her own as to an ancestral mansion. Religion to her was a part of good form. She attended St. Thomas's, was particular about Lent, and hung over her bed a picture of the martyrdom of Saint Blandina. There had been so many Blandina Vandertyls among her forebears that the holy North African maidservant seemed to belong to their own family. No, it was not because of the ecclesiastical atmosphere that she didn't want to go to Mrs. Appleworth's; it was because, whatever the atmosphere, she was tired of it beforehand.

Then she remembered that she would see Gwennie Hesketh there. These were not directly the Appleworths into whose family Gwennie was marrying, but

they were collaterals. The tea was in honor of the engagement, just as if every particle in the jellyfish hadn't been aware of it long ago, and hadn't a dozen times already met both the affianced and blessed them. As Blandina had foreseen, they were to a man and to a woman exactly the same people who had been gathering in one house or another for the past six weeks to celebrate the same event. In the interludes of gossip they discussed President Wilson's appeal for the League of Nations, Maurice Gest's "Mecca," and the *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt.* If she hadn't had an object . . .

She was careful not to be too clear as to what that object was. To hear about the dear Hesketh, now that their son had come home, was as far as she went in expressing it. That there had ever been anything between Owen and herself she banished to that limbo we all keep for inconvenient thoughts. It was so long ago, and she had been nothing but a girl! Even then it had been the mischief in Owen that had attracted her. A good boy would not have done it. But a boy who was forever getting into scrapes had that devil in him in which she was quite deficient, and yet admired hungrily.

She liked Gwennie not only because she was beautiful, but because she was simple and sincere. There never was a girl who traded less on the asset of her beauty, or who had fewer affectations. In their corner, after the guests had thinned out, Blandina approached her point by the questions likely to be put to a future bride by one who had known her from her cradle—there was six years' difference in their ages—coming at last to:

"And, dear, I want you to choose one of three things I'm thinking of giving you for a wedding present." She named the three objects, and with little cries of, "How simply thrilling!" "Oh, how dear of you!" Gwennie selected the one she preferred. After that it was easy to ask after her father and mother, so reaching her objective point, "And do tell me how Nod is, since he's come home again."

A mist of tears gathered in Gwennie's green-blue eyes. "But we don't know anything about him. He never turned up."

As she described the scene at the breakfast table on the morning of the seventh, with its cruel disappointment, Blandina felt her heart sinking. "And you've had no trace of him since?"

Gwennie shook her head. "Father and Lloyd have done everything; but ——"

"Have they applied to—to—I hate the idea—to the police?"

"No. Father won't do that. He says that if Nod doesn't want to come home he must be free to stay away; but he and poor mother are heartbroken."

"Does he know you're going to be married?"

"Yes; I've told him so in several of my letters. We've been particular to give him all the news, just because he's been—where he's been—so that he shouldn't feel we were leaving him out of anything; but he's never answered, not even to send me a good wish."

"I can understand that in him; he was so proud. That's what's keeping him away now, don't you think? While you're going through all this"—she nodded to-

ward the big room—"he doesn't want to embarrass you. As soon as it's all over ——"

"We've talked about that; but father doesn't seem to think he will. He thinks he's striking out to make his own life independently."

Blandina spoke with some conviction. "I admire that in him, even though . . . "

But in the motor going homeward she talked to herself, pensively. "After all, I suppose it's best . . . for me. . . . It's foolish on my part to want him to come and see me. . . . He never was a drawing-room lap-dog . . . and couldn't begin to be one after all he's been through. . . . It's just as well. . . . It has to be. . . . Of course, if I ever do see him again I shall . . . I shall be nice to him . . . but that's all that could ever be possible . . . now. . . . "

To her surprise, and somewhat to her indignation, she found herself bursting into tears.

In its way it was hard on Tiddy Epps to have a wife who was his conscience. The minute he had told her, with some pride in his own generosity in making the proposal, that Jack Owen had declined day work and preferred to keep on at night, she had come back with the declaration, "Then you ought to raise him five."

"Why?" he not unnaturally asked.

"Because he's woyth it. You've paid washers thoyty a week already."

"When I couldn't get 'em for less; but this nut I can."

"He's not a nut; he's your old friend. A gentleman's a gentleman even if he's been in Bitterwell."

Tiddy stepped on the gas, as they passed Claremont, and sped northward along by the river. "We-ell, there's two ways o' lookin' at that proposition ——"

"No, they ain't; not when you were boys together and he used to let you in on everything nice, the way you say he did. You can't turn round on him now and do him doyty—not if you want to be a gentleman."

Though this to Tiddy was the tickle of the whip, he had too much spirit not to retort that there was something to be said on his side. "The piker owes me money. He didn't pay all his debt up—not by a lot."

"He went to Bitterwell to pay up what he could. What more can you ask of him? A fella who's been up there comes back with a clean slate."

On the principle of the dropping of water wearing away a stone, Tiddy found at last that he had no choice but to yield to this plain-spoken power making for righteousness. An evening came when he decided not to go home till his former friend came on for his night's work, leaving an order with the checker to send him straight to the office. The office was a room secreted somehow beneath the upward and downward set of ramps, and furnished with a roll-top desk and two or three chairs. On its walls hung a large framed photograph of the steamship, *Leviathan*, another of Mount Donald in the Canadian Rockies, and a highly colored print of a row of pretty chorus girls in hula-hula dress and artless attitudes. Tiddy, bored by waiting and more by the generosity he didn't want to show, sat tipped back in his revolving chair, his feet on the desk,

and a quill toothpick traveling from corner to corner of his long thin mouth.

Without changing his position, and allowing Jack Owen to stand, he flung him a jerk of the head. "'Lo, Nod! How's things?"

Nod replied that things were fine.

"Still stuck on night work?"

"For now—yes."

"No complaints to pass up? No cuss words?"

"None whatever."

"Job pretty much what I told you, ain't it?—cold—wet—worse'n what you had—up there."

"Got used to it. Hardly ever think of it."

"Good! Fellas speak kind o' well o' your work. Reason I asked you to come in, want to raise you five a week. How'd that strike you?"

Owen looked blank. "That's fine," he said, absently, as if with something on his mind. "I—I don't want you to think I'm not grateful. In fact—in fact, I'm so darned grateful that I'd—I'd like you to use the money—for something else."

Tiddy's feet descended to the floor. With his elbows on the desk he studied Owen as if he had been a strange and puzzling animal. "Say, what you comin' at?"

"You see," Owen tried to explain, "I still owe you a good deal of money. When Wrig Coppard and I went broke together we were in your debt to the extent of something like seventeen hundred dollars. My share was eight hundred and fifty. Of this I paid four hundred and fifty—and you know how I got the cash. But I still owe you four hundred; and if you'll count the

five a week you were going to add to my pay toward the reduction of the debt, why, then, in the course of two years I could work the whole thing off."

To Tiddy's character there were many facets, one of the largest and brightest being his sense of justice in getting back his money. He could hardly express his enthusiasm. "Say, Nod, that's somethin' I never expected. Honest to God I didn't. No whiter thing has ever been put up to me—and a lot o' fellas'll look down on a guy just because he's been—where you've been. By gum! if it does every chap the same good as it's done you, why, I say swoop 'em up to it. Well, Nod, since you seem to have it on your mind like, I'll take you at your word—and we won't say nothin' about the interest."

"Oh, but I've included that—at six per cent. You'll find, I think, if you reckon it up, that five dollars a week for two years will pay four hundred dollars, with four years' interest, and still leave a little over."

"That so? Well, I'll do the figurin' by and by." Another thought seemed to strike him. "But suppose you was to quit me before the two years was up?"

"In that case we'd make some other arrangement. I shouldn't leave you—if you don't fire me, that is—unless I got something better, and in that case I could spare the five a week still more easily. To square the thing off I'd work for you for nothing, only I've got to live, and I can't do that on less than twenty-five."

"By gum! You're a game kid. And me thinkin' that because you'd been sent up the river . . . If Wrig

Coppard that's rollin', simply rollin' in dough—a stock-broker he is now—'d only foot up like that ——"

Owen's heart leaped. Obscurely it was to verify this suspicion that he had looked for work in the New Netherlands Garage. Now he almost choked in trying to get the words out. "W-well, hasn't he?"

"Not a red, and him rollin' in it like a sow in mud. Dunned him and dunned him. Never got no answer. And I don't think it would look gentleman-like to go to law—two old buddies."

If he were to put in motion a train of events that would lead to his great purpose, Owen knew that this was his opportunity. As he couldn't say much, what he did say must be the more carefully worded. "Does his—does his old man know—anything about it?"

Tiddy's greedy eyes gleamed like those of a voracious bird. "Would you advise me to go and tell him?"

Opening the door, Owen made as if going way. "Oh, I couldn't advise you. You'd have to make up your own mind about that."

"I'd do it—if I had the nerve."

"Oh, you don't have to have much nerve. Old chap quiet as a cow. Be more afraid of you than you need be of him."

Tiddy's whole face was glowing with excitement. "That so?"

"Only, if you do go you won't say anything—about me."

"Sure thing! Mum as if you was dead."

"And I could give you a few points—as to just what you ought to tell him."

Part Four

BLANDINA found Wrig Coppard seated on her left. She had almost come to expect this when she went out to dine, for their names had been so much coupled that hostesses seemed to think that she liked having him beside her.

And to some extent she did. If she was the type of little woman who appeals to big men, he was the type of big man who appeals to little women. It was certain that, as she looked the table up and down, there was none who could compare with him in the outward trappings of manliness. A magnificent animal, he was specially well suited to magnificent surroundings. That single detail gave him in Blandina's eyes a peculiar sort of value.

For generally she found, as she found on this occasion, that when the house was princely, as many of the houses she frequented were, the noble background only threw into relief the fact that the human element was commonplace. Standing for big business, there was no other ingredient to mix with it, no mitigation, nothing to give the gathering "tang." There were no artists, no actors, no writers, no clergymen, no scholars, no scientists, no explorers, no editors, no soldiers, politicians, diplomatists, or statesmen. If occasionally one such sample drifted in among them he was sure to be a foreigner to whom America was showing off. For example, the man who had that evening taken in the hostess, and been seated next to herself, was a French

duc, of the old *noblesse d'épée*, it was true, but impoverished and unintelligent. And yet for him all this display had been arranged by those who ignored the interesting among their own countrymen. She knew there were other New Yorks than this one; she knew that even in this one there were people of solid worth, spiritual yearnings, and high philanthropic aims; yet even they were inspired by a sense of duty in the proper use of money-power. Money-power was what you breathed from the minute the footman admitted you to that when he showed you to your car. She had had companions who, in driving homeward, had reckoned up the evening in money terms: "We dined a hundred and twenty millions this evening." "We sat down two hundred millions strong." She was sure that one or two of the men who sat opposite, men with uptown clothes but downtown faces, were making that very estimate.

And from some points of view she couldn't blame them. They were men who had probably come from modest but comfortable homes of the Middle West variety, and, for this reason or for that—the making of a few millions of their own being one of them—had found themselves drawn in by the tentacles of the jelly-fish till they were right inside its maw. After a life-time of a best dinner service in some useful Staffordshire ware, it would seem to them an awesome event to be eating off continuous gold plate, as they were this evening. After dining-rooms which accommodated eight or ten, to sit down at a dinner of twenty-four, each person seated on a carved Italian throne in gold

and cut-velvet, like the four-and-twenty elders in the Divine Apocalypse, with a background of Flemish tapestries, could hardly be other than an opportunity for reckoning up costs. Even the wines and flowers were such as in frugal Europe would be seen only when royalty was entertaining royalty. Where so much money had been made and spent you would naturally want to put a price on everyone and everything. You would feel yourself "admitted," not as being where you belonged. Of these twenty-two guests Blandina believed that more than half must have found an enhancement of being in the fact of having been invited.

But among them would not be Wrigley Coppard. As with herself, custom had made him at home with it. So many of their friends could spend without limit that spending without limit had become incidental. Not all who could do it did it; and not all who did it did it all the time; but some one somewhere could always be found doing it, and when that was the case only the privileged were asked to come and see it done. For all sorts of reasons difficult to define in their nuances she was among them, and so was Wrigley Coppard; and of all the men of her acquaintance, which was large, he was the only one who didn't seem dwarfed by a blow-out of splendor.

So that was to his credit. It was also to his credit—and she kept repeating it—that she knew nothing against him. That was to say, she knew nothing against him but what she feared in occasional uncomfortable feelings; and uncomfortable feelings could easily not be justified. In any case she liked him, and that he

was "crazy" to marry her gave a fascinating piquancy to their meetings.

Nevertheless, she kept him waiting, talking in French with the distinguished foreigner on her other side. When at last she felt that courtesy compelled her to say a word to him she had the word ready: "So poor Nod didn't return home, after all. What do you think can have become of him?"

He was obliged to subdue the rumble of his bass so as not to be overheard by the whole table. "I don't think. Why should I?"

"I suppose for the same reason that I do—because he was your friend."

"*Was* my friend, yes—worse luck; but it doesn't follow that he is today—after what's happened."

"How queer you are! Why, I feel as if he was more my friend—or rather, perhaps, that I'm more his friend —than ever."

"But you may have reasons that I haven't."

Understanding this hint, she nevertheless didn't resent his way of carrying the war into her own camp. "Perhaps I have. But what makes you so bitter against him?"

He seemed to her to search for a reason. "Well, if your father had been done out of a big sum of money ——"

"Oh, I don't call that a big sum of money—not for your father—nor, for the matter of that, for mine. And I suppose poor Nod had need of the cash." The next words were out before she thought of them. "I wonder you didn't need it, too."

She knew that this was wrong, but not so wrong as he appeared to find it. Coloring like a stormy sunset, he stammered, "W-what do you mean by th-that?"

"Well, you were his partner in that absurd garage you took together. Didn't it come out at the trial that it was to pay his debt to the man from whom you rented it that he—he did the thing he was charged with? You owed the debt between you, didn't you? If he couldn't pay his share ——"

"Then I couldn't pay mine. Is that what you're coming at?"

"I'm not coming at anything. It only strikes me as queer that ——" She broke off to take up the subject from another angle. "If you could pay your share, why, for goodness' sake, didn't you pay his, too—a little sum like that!—and save him from such a scandal?"

"Suppose I didn't know anything about it—till the fool thing was done?"

"That's what I have supposed, of course. But there's one thing that came out in the evidence that's always puzzled me. Why, when he got nine hundred dollars from the check did he pay the man only four hundred and ——"

As she hung fire he pressed her, "Well, go on."

But she only laughed in his face. "Oh, nothing! Don't look so awfully like a thunder-cloud. I'm not really raking the thing up again. If you weren't so hard on him I shouldn't ——"

Though the flush went out of his face he was not

appeased. "Would you let me give you a bit of advice?"

"Why, certainly! Only you said not long ago that you couldn't give me advice unless I promised to take it, and I can't say beforehand whether I'll take it or not."

"On second thoughts I won't put it in the form of advice; I'll ask it as a favor."

"Very well. Ask."

"If Nod Hesketh ever turns up again, will you promise me that you won't see him?"

While helping herself to something being passed to her she had time to reflect on this. "I might—if you'd give me a good reason."

"Can't you trust me to have a good reason—without giving it?"

"I can trust you, yes—and still like to know what it is."

"But, you see, I can't tell you."

"Oh, then I can't promise. But I'll say this: it would have to be an extraordinary reason for me to—to dream of doing it."

He ate for a minute in silence; he took a long gulp of champagne. "I'll tell you this much," he ventured at last, "that if you were to see him I'm sure he'd spin you a yarn that ——"

It was purely a spirit of mischief which prompted her to interpose, "That might involve you?"

"That might—try—to involve me."

But again she only laughed at him. "Oh, nonsense, Wrig! You've got it on the brain. Nod would never

do such a thing. You don't know him. He'd die first. Why, he wouldn't have given you away even if you'd been in the whole thing with him—from the first." Able throughout to keep her tone light, she now made it lighter. "But we won't talk any more about it. You're hipped on the subject, and one day you'll acknowledge it. Tell me—what do you think of Theodore's Letters, now that you've read them at last?"

Going down to the kitchen one afternoon, on waking from his daytime sleep, Owen found his hostess, Mrs. Bird, busy as usual with her household tasks. Katy and Danny being out on their jobs, their mother for the first time struck him as a human being and accessible. For a reason he could not have explained, a glance of understanding passed between them. It encouraged him to wish her good day, to say he was grateful for her kindness, and to hope he was not a burden on her hands. Her response was not ungracious; it was only doleful.

"Nobody that's been through the trouble that I 'ave don't expect nothin' but a burden on their 'ands. If it wasn't you it'd be somebody else, so there it is."

Never having heard her say so much at one time he led her on to talk. Talking, she emerged from the background of the sordidly inanimate and took on personality. She had a history. She had loved and suffered. As vital as he and his affairs were to himself she and her affairs were to herself. This withered old woman, negligible to everyone in the world, unless it were her daughter, had memories, cravings, hopes, and

despairs, and all that goes with a heart. To a man as young as Owen it was strange; but it was so.

"I was born in Devonshire," she confessed, when urged to sketch her past, "at a little place called Newton Jukes. I was what they calls a foundlin' in England—a kind o' child they has over there, but I never heered of in this country. This be a back'ard country in many ways, it seems to me, for all it's so rampageous. We all lived together, twenty-five of us, in a beautiful 'ouse and garding, the best of nourishment, and ladies to take care of us, and everything. We was all dressed alike, little blue suits and shiny black sailor 'ats, and when we went out to walk we marched two and two, just like a young ladies' boardin'-school. You couldn't see anything pleasanter or aristocratiker."

"I'm sure of it," Owen interposed, politely.

Standing in the middle of the floor, she scoured a saucepan with a dirty rag. "Then when my eddication was finished I was put to the Eagle and Child as a chambermaid. I didn't like that so much; but an American lady come to stay there, with three little children, and seemed to take a fancy to me. I was real pretty then, and 'ad that good manners that when I 'ad to make a bed I 'ad an unwillin' feelin' in the pit o' my stomach. So the American lady took me on as nurse, and when she went back to America she asked me to go with her. Well, me 'avin' no relations—foundlin's don't 'ave 'em—I was crazy to go and see the world like—and what do you think was the trick she played on me?"

Owen replied that so wide a choice stumped him.

"It'd stump anyone that 'ad a 'eart. You see, wages was low at Newton Jukes, and I didn't know they was any 'igher anywheres else. So she made me sign a paper that, because she was payin' my passage like, I'd stay with 'er for three years, at what she was givin' me then. That was about three times less than she could 'a' got anyone to take care of her children in New York. So there I was, sold into slavery like, me that thought all Americans was so nowble and tender-'earted."

"Too bad," Owen murmured, sympathetically.

Putting down the saucepan, she took up a frying-pan, going through the same operation. "That was 'ow I met Bird, an Englishman, too, only from Yorkshire. 'E was a 'od-carrier by trade, something like Danny in looks, but that strong he could carry a big trunk on his back—'e'd take a job as porter at a station when 'od-carryin' was low—as easy as 'e'd swing a baby. Well, we was married, and for a few years we done swell. We saved money, and bought this little 'ouse, gettin' it cheap because there's no title on it and it don't pay no taxes. Bird didn't 'old with taxes, and I don't, neither. In England they'd pass a law to stop 'em if anyone was to go taxin' people the way they do 'ere. I never heered of no taxes in England, and I was twenty-two before I left there. It was all lords and ladies, and 'ardly no laws, nor nothink. But in this country it's laws everywhere. You can't 'ardly do nothink but there'll be a law ag'in' it. Look at that Bitterwell. If it wasn't for the laws there wouldn't be 'alf as many poor fellows be'ind bars."

Owen having admitted this, she went on with her chronicle. Once the dam upon her speech was broken, the pent-up heart, to which no one would listen any longer, poured itself out torrentially. To Owen it was of interest since what she told him explained the origin of Katy and Danny and the reasons why they were as they were.

Business that had once been so good gradually became poorer. With the introduction of steel and cement in building there was less demand for 'od-carrying. Obliged to support his family, Bird took to light-fingerin', an art for which he had aptitudes and for which he had twice been convicted in Leeds before coming to America at all. This she hadn't known when she married him; and if she had—though she didn't know. Love is a hard master, and sometimes overrides the better judgment. At any rate, while Katy was growing big and Danny emerging from childhood into boyhood, light-fingering had become their father's chief source of livelihood. And the queer thing was that he was never caught. This encouraged the belief that he never would be. Believing that he never would be, he went from bold attempt to bolder. It was easy work and good money, only it led him into bad ways. He made bad acquaintances. Having progressed from light-fingering to burglary, he stayed away at nights. Often he would be gone a week at a time, and when he came back it would be plain that he had been drinking. Drinking became habitual. In one of his spells he had struck Katy such a blow that she had fallen and twisted her hip. She was then about ten. For nearly

a year she had been in a children's hospital. Nothing could be done for her, and when she came out she was permanently lamed. Not long after that had come the last catastrophe.

In robbing a house Bird had fought with a man and killed him. After two years of appeal and reprieve, appeal and reprieve, he had gone to the electric chair. "Nobody what hasn't been through it can fancy what it's like. It's not as if it was some one you was fond of sick on a dyin' bed. That's nat'rel like. Mebbe a sick person don't want to die, but when he's sick in bed he gets kind o' worked up to it. You has the doctor and the undertaker and the funeral all in a reg'lar way. You wears mournin', and after a while you kind o' forgits. But this is a well person. He's kept in a cage and he's watched day and night. Every time you goes to see 'im you 'as to talk to 'im with other people listenin'. You thinks o' the times when you and 'im et at the same table and slep' in the same bed. You 'ad your children and planned 'ow you'd eddicate 'em and feed and clothe 'em. And now you're only waitin' for the mornin' when they'll wake 'im up to tell 'im to git ready for to come and 'ave 'is life took."

Having put the frying-pan on a shelf, she returned with a tin dish, which she scoured with the same piece of dirty rag. "It was the waitin' that was the worst. After it was all over we made up our minds to it. But Katy and Danny and me 'ad gone twice to bid 'im good-by, and they didn't do nothink to 'im afterward; and then when it was the end 'e 'imself wouldn't see us, because 'e wouldn't put us through it the third time,

with the children growin' older and understandin' better what it meant. The night when it 'appened, well, I couldn't do nothink but just sit 'ere by myself—the children went to bed and to sleep in spite of everythink —and foller the best way I could all the things they was doin' to 'im—my poor Bird—and me with me 'eart breakin', and then I saw it in the papers in the mornin'."

As tactfully as he could Owen asked her if she had not disapproved of her husband's light-fingering after 'od-carrying had failed him.

"We-ell, yes, I did, in a way. But it's like everythink else. You gits to find it nat'rel. The children 'ad to be fed and I needed nourishment. I've always been delikit. I don't git the nourishment I need even now. Bird was always a good provider, and 'e couldn't bear to see me pinin' away for lack o' proper food when other people 'ad it. There's nobody to care about me now, not the way 'e did. Danny ain't to be depended on, and Katy shuts me up the minute I begin to talk. If she was 'ere now she wouldn't let me say a word. Oh, she does the best she kin, and supplies the table as far as her earnin's 'ull take 'er; but it's a poor country for nourishment, any'ow. At the Foundlin's 'Ome we always 'ad the best. . . . " She drew a long sigh, turning away to put the tin dish in its place in the *batterie de cuisine.* "But if Danny wouldn't begin again. . . . so soon . . . follerin' 'is father . . . and perhaps to end the same way. . . ."

To Owen this was a shock. Because of their method of living, he saw next to nothing of Danny nowadays. "You don't mean to tell me he's at it already?"

It was to Owen's overalls and overcoat, among other things, that the poor woman had reference as she piteously quavered, "Can't you *see?*"

From one of the lesser doors of the new cathedral two elderly men came out together, walking away somewhat aimlessly. It was obvious that companionship rather than direction was keeping them side by side.

"Only got to say the word, Leolin, and I'll put on his tracks half the detectives in New York."

The clergyman shook his head. "No, William. He's a grown man. If he wants to stay away he must stay away. But it's hard to know nothing about him after the years when we've been longing to see him home."

"Bet it's hard. Why, when Wrig was over there in France—but then you went through that with Lloyd. Had your share, haven't you? And I don't mind sayin' that this boy of yours has given me many a wakeful night ever since he went to Bitterwell. Wondered sometimes it we did right ——"

"We acted according to our consciences. We can't go back on decisions made like that."

"No, but, now that he's paid his penalty, I'd like to—to do what I can to give him a fresh start."

"That's very kind of you, William; but I'm afraid that after all he's been through he feels—well, I think we can judge of how he feels by the fact that he hasn't come home."

William Coppard fetched a long sigh. "Queer thing the way you can try to do your duty—and have every dang thing go to the old scratch."

"I don't think we can say that yet. We don't know what it's gone to."

"And you say you've made all the inquiries?"

"Yes, Lloyd and I have both been up to Bitterwell. At the prison we got such facts as they knew; but after he left there all trace of him was lost. You see, it was just the hour when the station and train were full of commuters coming into town, and no one had time to notice him."

"Didn't you think of meeting him yourself—or having Lloyd do it?"

"Yes. We asked the chaplain to find out from him whether or not he'd like it. He wouldn't write to us himself, or answer any of our questions. The chaplain told me that he begged us not to come—that he'd find his way alone. Such a thought as his not coming home never entered our minds."

Reaching the statue of a man looking out over Greater New York they sat down. Behind them they had the apse of the cathedral, reminiscent of Beauvais or Bourges. At their feet the tree-covered escarpment of the cliff broke downward some three hundred feet, in crimsons, umbers, and yellows. Spread out before them a large part of the city lay like a map, with the silver flash of the East River cutting it in two. At this height, and in this tranquillity, harshness and sordidness were mellowed by soft haze, and tumult subdued to a murmur.

The commission merchant again endeavored to work off some of the burden on his conscience. "Think, Leo-

lin, that if we'd let it go the second time he'd have quit the game?—or would he have done it again?"

The father of the culprit took his time before answering. "I don't want to be hard on him, but—I think he would have done it again. He was a wild, headstrong boy. There was something in him that forbearance couldn't reach or correct."

"Then you don't think that we were two old brutes?"

"Not when I saw how impenitent he was. You must remember that I insisted on your going ahead with the charge. He'd no idea of having committed more than a trivial offense. Worse than that, he had the kind of egoism which bitterly resented any complaint against himself. What we did was the only way of bringing the wrongdoing home to him."

"How do you account for it, Leolin, that you and me, that's tried to live decent lives, should each have had a son . . . ? He braced himself to ask a question which in confidential talks with his old friend had often been on his lips. "Did you ever think that—that Wrig—might have had anything to do with it?"

The other replied only after thinking. "I've always preferred to believe that if he had he'd have come forward and shared the blame. Since he didn't ——"

"You acquitted him."

"I was glad to."

"Did you think he might have had a hand in it because the forged word in the second check was so like that in the first? Because, if you did, they were bound to be alike when each was an imitation ——"

"No; I didn't think anything about that. I hardly

looked at the check in either case. If Wrig came into my mind it was because—well, because they'd acted together when the thing had been done before, and they were more intimate than brothers right up to the minute when you found that you were a victim for the second time. But when Wrig didn't say anything I presumed he had nothing to say. It was the only fair thing."

"Well, I haven't taken it so easy; only, Wrig swears to me . . . But if we could ever find your boy again I'd see that he got . . . "

It was the annual sale of Oriental objects held by the American Society for the support of the Leper Hospital at Wangchow. Blandina was punctilious in attending such functions, and spending her money generously, because she did so little otherwise. It was always on her conscience that she was a cumberer of the ground. Most of the women she knew were on committees for this or for that and were forever busy in "getting up" something, while she could do no more than put her hand in her pocket. She was not only without organizing gifts, but without philanthropic enthusiasms. Many a time she would say to herself that she would give anything to be interested in a cause, and yet could never whip herself up to it. Ashamed of this inability, in a world where women were so active, she would put up a bluff, would lend her name, as they called it, and would subscribe handsomely; but in her heart of hearts, she confessed to herself, not without mortification, she didn't care a hang. The things she did care for were different; and not only were they out of her

reach, but so nebulous that, longing for them intensely, she didn't know what they were. Most of her friends put her down as idle, comfort-loving, self-indulgent, which, she admitted, was an accurate description. At the same time, though she never recognized the wayward streak in her except by whimsical allusions, she knew it was the most insistent thing about her. Everything else she could down; that she couldn't down, unless she downed herself.

> Oh, what care I for your goose-feather bed,
> With the sheet turned down so bravely O?
> For tonight I will lie in the cold open field
> Along with the raggle-taggle gypsies O!

Had she been able to express the willful, inarticulate, indefinable craving she was unable to suppress, it would have been in words like this, which she often hummed in her heart.

Obliged to be a lady, moving in those circles which social editors spoke of as exclusive, she tried to do her duty by coming up to expectations. In this way, to meet the needs of the lepers of Wangchow, she had purchased a number of things which she didn't want, and did not go home at once only because she thought it good policy to linger, in order that her friends would take notice that she was backing up their efforts. A pair of Japanese prints by Hiroshige, a bit of carved carnelian mounted on crystal, a jar of *famille rose*, two plates of *famille verte*, and a red lacquer tray represented an expenditure of nearly two hundred dollars, which she thought was enough for the day. Keeping

her parcels well in sight, so that she would be as little pestered as might be by the débutantes who took it as part of their débutanting to dress in Chinese costumes and peddle articles about the room, she found a corner with a table set for tea at which to sit down and refresh herself. She could have joined some one else, or invited some one else to join her, only that she was too tired.

And just as she was taking her first sip of tea, and thinking how comforting it was, who should bear down on her but Mrs. Coppard?

"My dear, I want you to look at this. I'm thinking of giving it to Gwennie Hesketh as a wedding present. I've got to give her something."

The selection was a string of jade beads, effective and not expensive. Without waiting for an invitation, Mrs. Coppard slipped into the chair opposite Blandina, who asked her to accept a cup of tea.

"No, no tea thank you. Consider it poison. Haven't touched it for years."

So as not, while eating, to put her fingers on beads which had been passed all day from hand to hand, Blandina looked at them from a distance. "I think they're very pretty. With a certain kind of costume ——"

"Of course," Mrs. Coppard hastened to assure her, "this is not the only thing we're giving her. My husband sent quite a handsome check the minute they were engaged. He was her godfather. Not that he was bound by that—when I was married my godfather never sent me anything—but he dotes on Leolin Hesketh, and Leolin Hesketh hangs around him. Ridiculous, I

call it, two old men as fond of each other as a pair of schoolgirls."

Blandina looked mildly across her cup. "I've always heard that men's friendships had a kind of loyalty in them that ——"

"I've no patience with them. Where one had money and the other hasn't ——"

"Oh, but I'm sure that never could count in this case."

"Then you must allow me to contradict you. I *know*. I'm in a position to know. As friends they haven't a thought in common. I certainly thought, four years ago, that when my husband prosecuted that son of his it would make a breach of some sort—but not a bit of it. Leolin Hesketh took it lying down, like all the family, for that matter, and my poor old goose of a William is so sorry for himself now that he could cry."

Blandina gazed at the lady in astonishment. Though she had never found her sympathetic and had been indeed a little afraid of her, she had not thought of her as vulgar. To be sure, her looks were vulgar, but so were those of a good many other people who belied them. Massive, big-featured, and commanding in appearance, she had a habit of laying down the law. In her voice was the deep bass rumble she had passed on to her son.

She had also passed on to her son the little eyes and the hard straight mouth which kept Blandina from quite trusting him. These features seemed the meaner because the others were open and generous. In each the nose was finely formed, the jaw strong, the chin straight, while the brow might have been called noble. But something set these excellent traits awry, and Blandina

could not say what it was. She had heard that among the Wrigleys an almost vicious egoism had long been a ruling quality, but she hesitated to ascribe so odious a fault to anyone whom she liked. She did like Wrig, though not till this minute, that she could remember, had she ever been alone with Wrig's mother, or been called on to form an opinion of her character.

Gradually it came to her that Mrs. Coppard was talking with a purpose, and that the beads had been only an excuse. What the purpose was she could not see as yet, and so listened with only an interjection now and then.

"I don't know how you feel, Blandina, but I'm beginning to think I've had enough of the Hesketh."

"They're very great friends of mine," Blandina ventured, timidly.

"So they've been of mine, of course; but you can have too much even of something good. You see, I've had them on my hands longer than you can remember."

"Oh?"

"William and I were just young married people when old Dr. Galloway brought Leolin out from England as his curate. We attended St. Mary Magdalen's then, as my family had always done. The Coppards—well, I don't know where they went to church, or if they ever went anywhere. You've heard, of course, that William was just a poor boy, of no family to speak of. He owes everything to me. I often wonder nowadays how I came to fall in love with him; but I did. My parents were frantic to put a stop to it; but, though you wouldn't think it of me now, I had a will of my

own in those days and carried it through in spite of them. And I must say William was good-looking. He's good-looking still, but nothing to what he was. I suppose you can't remember when he was so slim and handsome ——"

Blandina shook her head.

"Ah, well! We all change. I'm not what I used to be, myself, although I'm often taken for . . . But I was going to tell you about the Hesketh. You know, I always say that these young Englishmen of good family who come over here are all on the make. If they were not on the make what would they come for? I don't care whether they're in business or the Church or what they're in, they're looking out for ——" Mrs. Coppard tapped herself on the bosom as indicating Number One. "And this young Hesketh was no exception. He cottoned right on to William and me, and William he went silly over him. It was Leolin here and Leolin there, and William this and William that, till I was sick of the two names."

Blandina took her courage in both hands. "Do you know, Mrs. Coppard, I think there's something beautiful in a friendship like that between two men, both of them so good and simple ——"

"Oh, simple! Why, William's that simple you could get him to sign his fortune away if you worked him hard enough. When that awful young Nod Hesketh nearly ruined him by forging his name to a check he wouldn't have gone into court if I hadn't prodded him up to it. He made a great fuss and all that; but after a few days he'd have backed down like a barking dog

when you shake a stick at him, if it hadn't been for me. And even now ——"

"Yes, Mrs. Coppard? Even now ——"

"If the scamp were to turn up he'd—don't laugh, Blandina, though it's one of those funny things that are nearly tragic—but if the young rascal were to turn up—he'd make a place for him in his business!"

In spite of herself tears flushed Blandina's eyes. "That seems to me very noble."

"Oh yes, it would—to all you sentimentalists; but . . . there I go again, getting away from the Hesketh. Well, when this Leolin had got pretty thick with us he sprung on us one day that his father and mother were coming over to visit him. We knew by that time that his father was Sir Leolin Hesketh, and his mother Lady Gwendolen. Those Welsh people have such outlandish names. But when I told my own mother about it—she was living then, in our old house on Washington Square, and still entertaining a good deal—well, my dear, I wish you could have seen her. Five years later she died of a stroke, and I do think it began then. 'Is *that* the Hesketh he is?' I can hear her say it as if it was yesterday—a great cry of horror. Well, when she told me the story—you see, my father had been first secretary to our legation—it was a legation then—at the Court of St. James's, and there was nothing in the way of these big English scandals that he and my mother didn't know ——"

"But what could it have been?" Blandina asked, wondering.

The deep voice sank to a diapason whisper. "My

dear, I wouldn't repeat it to you. I couldn't soil my lips with it. Some other time—when there are not so many people around to overhear me. You know when these English people have a scandal—well, it's a scandal—I can tell you that—and in the good old Victorian days that we poor tight-laced Americans think were so proper—well, all I can say is read Lady Cardigan—or almost any of their diarists—and this Lady Gwendolen Hesketh—she was Lady Gwendolen Whiteacre then—Lord Clwyd's daughter —— Well, you can see the position my mother and I were in—but we shouldered it—we made them go down—for one thing New York was more unsullied then than it is now—people didn't know so much—they hadn't heard of what this Lady Gwendolen had been up to before Sir Leolin and she—and that of course made a difference—if they had—but anyhow, the titles, and the entertaining that was done for them—and my mother and I having sponsored them—and all that—put this Leolin in a position very different from before we took him up—and so when he married—and that was another disappointment ——"

"Disappointment to whom?"

"Well, to William in particular. As his best friend, William had set his heart on his marrying my sister Annie—she died later—but not on that account—and this Maud Lloyd—none of us had ever heard of her—a poor clergyman's daughter somewhere—and awful airs she's given herself—so it's no wonder, with his inheritance of bad blood, that that Nod of theirs should have turned out such a ——"

"Wasn't he a great friend of Wrig's?"

"As very young men only—and that's another of my worries—if he did turn up again—and Wrig were to meet him—he's so loyal, Wrig is—so faithful to any old friend who's got into trouble—it doesn't matter to him what the trouble is so long as it's an old friend—so that ——" As she paused for a long breath Blandina knew at last that they were coming to the point. "Oh, if only some nice girl would fall in love with him and marry him. I could sing my '*Nunc Dimittis*' if I could leave him in the hands of a good homey wife."

Blandina could say nothing. Longing to tear herself away, she was able only to sit still, fascinated by the beady little eyes. Mrs. Coppard continued confidentially, "I have some one in my mind."

By a great effort Blandina managed to get out the word, "Whom?"

"Serena Johnson." Her eyes never left Blandina's face. "She's the only girl he cares about—I think. At least, she's the only one he speaks of very much."

"She's a very nice girl," Blandina forced herself to say. "I don't see much of her—but what I do see I admire."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. Wrig seems to be running after her—and her family is the best. I only wish I could do more to throw them together—but our friends are so elderly. I did ask her once or twice, but I'm afraid she found it rather dull—so lively she is ——"

"If I could do anything," Blandina risked, in a small voice, "I'd gladly give a little dinner—or two or three little dinners ——"

"Oh, if you only would," Mrs. Coppard roared, in her terrible bass, "I should be so grateful."

When she had gone Blandina gathered up her parcels and made her way as quickly as possible to her car. Once within its seclusion she panted to herself: "It's not true. . . . He doesn't care for her. . . . He doesn't. . . . He doesn't. . . . He's not running after her. . . . She was trying to lead me on by—by making me feel jealous . . . and . . . O my God! . . ." she gave a little nervous laugh that was half a sob . . . "I'm afraid—I *am*."

With a hairpin Mrs. Hesketh picked out the threads from a small square of linen, turned down the hem, and basted it. The results she arranged in an orderly pile. Katy, as the more expert of the two, carried out the task of hemstitching. The work being mechanical, and the atmosphere of the sewing-room peaceful and sweet, it was natural that they should fall into scraps of talk more or less confidential.

"Have you your parents living?"

Katy replied that her mother was living, but that her father was dead.

"Brothers or sisters?"

"One brother, madam. He's a house-painter by trade."

"And he lives with you?—or is he married?"

"He lives with us, madam, when—when he's there."

"Oh, he isn't there all the time?"

"No, madam, not all the time."

Mrs. Hesketh was asking her questions purely to make conversation. "Where does he go?"

Katy bent her head over her stitching, apparently because she was ashamed, but really so as not to see Owen's mother's face when she struck so near home. "I'm sorry to say, madam, that—that he goes to jail."

Mrs. Hesketh said nothing. As far as Katy could observe with her head bent, she stopped her work with the hairpin. When, to avoid the effect of having spoken with a purpose, she asked her hostess for the spool of thread in order to thread her needle, she saw that the color had left the pretty lady's cheeks and that she was sitting as if in a cataleptic trance. This, however, did not last, and she soon resumed her picking out the threads as if Katy had said nothing.

In the following week she took the subject up again. "I didn't tell you last week how sorry I was to hear you'd had trouble with your brother."

"Oh, I knew you'd be sorry, madam. You didn't have to say so. I only told you so as you might know—the worst about me—when you've been so kind."

"The worst about you? How do you mean? It isn't your fault."

"No madam, I know. Only, when you've got anything like that in your family ——"

"Oh, but you're not the only one."

"I know that, madam; there are plenty of others; but when it's your own family you feel as if there was nobody else."

"Yes, I know," Mrs. Hesketh said, gently. "We've

got such a case in ours. Our elder boy—our eldest child ——"

In spite of the fact that Katy was, as she called it, play-acting with a purpose, the broken-hearted tone touched her on the quick. "Oh, madam, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings! I'm so sorry I said anything ——"

"No, you needn't be." She worked the hairpin industriously. "It's a relief, if anything, to feel there's some one else who knows all about it. My case is harder than yours because your brother does come home, whereas my poor boy ——"

Katy felt obliged to make a show of ignorance. "Oh, madam, it isn't *life?*"

"No, no! Not that at all! He's out. Only it's—it's even worse than when he wasn't—because—he's—he's disappeared."

Though she longed to say at once, "I can tell you all about him," Katy knew that it was Owen's secret and that she had no right to betray it. All she could do was to sympathize and to express her conviction that one day he would reappear.

"What I'm afraid of," his mother confessed, "is that he's shipped on some long voyage, as so many young men have done when they've been in trouble, and that we may never hear from him at all."

"I don't think that," Katy tried to reassure her. "I've seen a good deal of fellows from up there—Danny brings them to the house—and I've never known one who thought of doing it. They might not go back to

their folks—and generally their folks don't want 'em—but they hang about New York."

"That's even more dangerous than shipping before the mast."

"Yes, but it don't take him so far away. As long as he's in New York you don't know the minute you'll run into him. Besides ——"

Katy hanging fire, Mrs. Hesketh prompted her. "Besides—what, my dear?"

"I was only going to say that I go every Sunday evening to a meeting where we talk. It's not a church, but the meeting is kind o' religious. Anybody can come in off the street—it's away down Lafayette Street, in the crowded part—so long as he behaves respectable. There's one man at the head of it, but anyone can say what he wants to, even if he blasphemes."

"But what has that to do with—my boy?"

"Only this, madam, that the man who's at the head of our meeting—we call it the Sinners' Conference, just to give it a name—he says that everyone must get his own experience. He says that it's by our own experience more'n by another person's that we'll find our way."

"Find our way—where?"

"What he means is back to the good Lord. He says some go to Him straight, and others—most of us—all round Robin Hood's barn—but we all get there at last, if not in this world, then in some other world."

"Is your brother getting there?"

"I can't see that he is; but then I can't see far. The

man says sooner or later he will, even if it's only by suffering. He says that when we won't go straight we have to go by suffering, but that suffering's a cheap price to pay for what we get when we reach the journey's end."

"But what about your suffering, and mine—on their account?"

"He says that wouldn't be so bad if we'd only remember that the Lord has the thing in hand and is taking care of it."

"Can you remember that?"

"Not very well, madam; but I do—a little."

"And does it help you?"

"Oh yes, madam, a lot."

The question came out with an eagerness that was partly hopelessness. "How?"

"Well, this way, madam: when Danny goes to Bitterwell—he's been there three times now—I say to myself, 'Well, the good Lord is keeping up with him. He's not losing sight o' Danny even if Danny's losing sight o' Him. Danny's going the long way round, and'll have to pay for being so far astray; but he can't miss the good Lord in the long run, because however he dodges he'll find Him standing in his way.' And that sort o' gives me nerve."

Mrs. Hesketh continued diligently at work. "And you think it will be like that with my boy?"

"The man in Lafayette Street would say that it sure would be, madam."

"If it's the good Lord why does he *let* them go the

long way round? Why doesn't he keep them straight to begin with?"

"The man says that the good Lord never forces anyone. When I've asked him about Danny he's said that Danny takes his way and the Lord takes His; but that Danny can't expect the Lord not to beat him to it. He says for me just to bet on the Lord's love against Danny's foolishness, and to be calm and trustful like."

Throwing down her work, the older woman lifted up a stricken face. "Oh, if I only could be ——!"

"If you only could be, madam, I guess you'd find it the surest way of getting him back home."

Every second Sunday night Owen had to himself. In general he used it to make up arrears of sleep, but on the Sunday following his talk with Mrs. Bird he decided to get hold of Danny and take him to an eating-place for an evening meal. This would give him the opportunity of preaching to Danny his own gospel of keeping on the level.

Having waked as usual in the middle of the afternoon, the fancy took him, while waiting for Danny to come, to glance again at the article he had begun to write and which he had cast aside. Sitting on the edge of his disordered cot, with an oil-lamp at his elbow, he went over the rejected paragraphs, ending with:

> . . . . and still it will be whispered behind his back that he has been at Sing Sing, at Bitterwell, at San Mateo, or at Wormwood Scrubbs. In whatever is fundamental to social existence he is an Ishmael, an outcast from his father's house.

Finding this better than he had remembered it he was seized once more with the longing to begin again with the pen.

That there are many who are reasonably so the convict is always ready to admit. When his hand is against every man he recognizes the fact that every man's hand must of necessity be against him. In his own language the true criminal will tell you frankly that against his being put away he has no kick coming. But he also knows that all law-breaking is not crime, and that between crime and law-breaking no judge nor court has ever drawn the line of demarcation.

If all law-breaking were crime then it is probable that every American citizen, beginning with the President, should be behind bars. It has been reckoned by an eminent authority that every American citizen is subject to some 16,000 laws, civic, state, and federal. It is not possible to keep them all, or even to know what they are. True, many of them fall into abeyance, but they remain on the statute books, and every now and then convictions are obtained under them. For lighter offenses of this nature there is often an alternative of fine or imprisonment; but if the culprit cannot pay the fine his imprisonment is on exactly the same conditions as that of thieves and murderers.

From this point he went on to say that perhaps he could clinch his argument better if he gave a specific instance. In that case he would choose his own, since he, like many others, had been so broken on the wheel of justice that his life henceforth could never be otherwise than hideous and grotesque. As it was the privilege of the obscure to be frank and run on risk of recognition, he would tell his story as exactly as he could, and let the reader judge.

His story was then told, fairly and concisely, with only such variations as shielded his anonymity. Admitting his offense he contended that it was not a criminal offense in the sense of the crime which is a danger to a community. Had the forgery gone beyond the limits of two closely-united families it would have been another thing; but as it was, the matter had been one for domestic rather than judicial treatment. Granting, however, the necessity for judicial treatment, it was not a case for blighting a young man's career by the same kind of condemnation as that meted out to gunmen and thugs.

The two great problems which civilization as we have it today had shown itself incompetent to deal with were those of poverty and crime. Of the former he was not qualified to speak; but as to the latter he felt sure that the herding of all law-breakers in one unanalyzed mass of evil-doers was the initial mistake of justice. The science of penology might learn something from that of medicine. All sick people were not dumped into the same hospital without regard to individual diseases. There were hospitals for infectious cases, and hospitals for non-infectious. There were certain terrible maladies segregated in a hospital by themselves. When a hospital was not possible, at least there was a ward. He did not think that any great headway in the correction of the law-breaker—apart from his punishment—would be made till some such method was adopted.

As for me [he concluded] I am at thirty a man without a future, and I am but an instance of thousands and thou-

sands who are in the same plight. To be received back into the social system would be no consolation and would do me no good. Being now what the law has made of me, I should only be accepted on sufferance, and for most of us sufferance implies suffering. The ex-convict, as a rule, would rather suffer alone than with the kindliest of friends as onlookers.

We speak of rough justice, and justice as yet is very rough indeed. That I should have been punished I eagerly admit, but not with that kind of punishment. What kind of punishment it should be I am not prepared to say but it should take no great ingenuity to discover it. One thing I can affirm with all the vigor of my soul—that through nearly four years in a state prison I am blasted in body and character. Hate has filled a heart that was once affectionate, while my longing to get back at him who wriggled out of all the blame is a fire that never shall be quenched till I do it. And yet with a little more patience on the part of those who wished me well I could have become a useful member of my family and an honorable citizen. I was the colt in the pasture, kicking up his heels because he has not yet known the bridle. Had I been forgiven the second time by those who preached forgiveness until seventy times seven, the bridle would have done its work with me.

This is not a plea for myself—for me all pleas are too late—but for those who may be found, as they are found every day, in similar situations. Both my father and the man whose name I misused were convinced that the only way to bring me to a sense of guilt was to let the law get hold of me. As a matter of fact the sense of guilt was consuming me already, and if I attempted to brazen it out it was only to save my face. This I state merely to show that the best and most loving of judgments can easily be mistaken, and can be mistaken most easily when they are harsh.

Though all this was written with a burning heart, it had taken time. So absorbed had he been that he

had forgotten Danny. Now he picked up his hat and overcoat to go in search of him. But to treat him to a dinner he must have some money, and so went to the knot hole where he kept his hoard. Out of the twenty-one dollars and seventy-three cents he had saved by snipping and paring on all his expenses he meant to take three. It would be a sacrifice, but if he could influence Danny it would be worth it.

The knot hole had prepared itself as a natural hiding-place by being almost invisible except as Owen chanced to lie on his back in the cot, staring upward and sidewise. From any other spot in the attic, or viewed in any other way, you couldn't see it at all. Even in putting up his hand to get at his hoard Owen had to go by the sense of touch. But going by the sense of touch he now felt nothing. The knot hole was as empty as a last year's bird's nest. Thinking at first that he must have found a second such excavation in the wood, he pulled out the cot and squeezed himself under the eaves so that he could use his eyesight. But, no! There was only the one—and that had been cleaned out.

For a long minute his mind stopped working in astonishment. The full sum had been there when he turned in that morning, for he had added to it twenty-seven cents. Since then he had not left the attic. How the dev . . . ?

Then a faint memory came back to him, a memory so faint that it seemed but part of a dream. He had not waked, but his sleep had been disturbed. It had been sufficiently disturbed to give him the feeling that

some one was leaning across the cot—but that was all. The dim gleam of consciousness went out and he was dead asleep again.

Recalling this, the curse he muttered was so violent that to himself it seemed a cry.

Part Five

RUNNING down to the kitchen, if possible to catch the thief, Owen found Mrs. Bird in the rocking-chair in a state of collapse. Her lead lolled; her mouth hung open. She could scarcely speak. "Katy—Danny—get Katy." It was all she was able to say.

Owen's agitation was but one degree less extreme. "But I don't know where she is."

Raising a feeble arm she pointed to a drawer. "Open." When he had opened it she got out with difficulty the word, "Paper." Owen found a scrap of paper on which was scribbled an address in Lafayette Street. "There." A second later she added, gasping: "Get her. Tell her—Danny—spoons."

Owen inferred that Danny had stolen some priceless family possession, but in comparison with his own twenty-one dollars and seventy-three cents, scraped together by so much stinging privation, the loss seemed trivial. Had Danny been there he could have cracked his mean little skull as he would have cracked a nut.

But that was only a rush of passion. The state of the stricken woman demanded his attention first. Of the household habits he had learned enough to know that a neighbor, a Mrs. Gassaway, was on intimate terms with Katy and her mother, and would willingly give first aid.

Mrs. Gassaway, who had once been a beauty, now had a complexion that bore to the rose the relation of the petal in a jar of potpourri to the original blossom,

which was in itself a withered loveliness. The wife of the janitor in the tenement house in which he and she lived in the basement, she was doing her best to keep things together for her husband and herself, now that her five sons and two daughters had all married and left them in the lurch. "They're good children," she would sometimes sigh, "but they're great hands at passin' the buck to each other whenever anything's to be done for their father or me." She herself never passed the buck to anyone, and when Owen came making his appeal she left the cooking of the supper to her husband, and hastened to do what she could.

"It'll be that scamp of a son," she confided to Owen, as they went. "Why don't they put him in for life and be done with him? Katy and the mother'd have a lot more peace o' mind. Children's the quare things, anyhow. You bring them up as if they was your soul, and then they think no more about you than a sparrer of the egg it was hatched from."

Leaving the old woman in Mrs. Gassaway's care, Owen went in search of Katy. He knew she frequented some sort of meeting in Lafayette Street, though she had said very little about it. As a matter of fact, he didn't often talk with her, never so much at any one time as on the day when he had arrived. Since then she had watched over him and mothered him, but from a distance. The distance was due, he was aware, somewhat to himself, since his bitterness of spirit killed his human sympathies.

The evening was a cruel one. In getting himself to the subway station he was chilled to the bone. In spite

of Danny's overcoat, he was still insufficiently clad for very cold weather. Coming up to the surface at Bleecker Street, he had a block or two to shiver along before finding the right number.

The building had once been a dwelling, but was now turned into tenements, with a large room on the ground-floor, and in the room a large window. The window was painted a streaky brownish-white to protect those within from the view of passers-by. In black on the brownish-white were the two inviting words, "Come In."

Owen went in, finding himself in what had been intended for a shop, but was used as a hall. At the distant end was a low platform on which a man was seated with a small deal table in front of him. In rows that formed an irregular semicircle some thirty men, and half as many women, were seated on common wooden chairs. There was seemingly no order of precedure, while freedom to come and go was accorded everyone. As Owen entered a woman was coming out; two men came in after him. So long as they did it quietly, people changed seats as they chose, or whispered together. If the meeting grew too restless the chairman's gentle tapping with a gavel produced immediate quiet.

Owen stood in the background, waiting for Katy to notice him. Seated in the front row of the semicircle, and at the right-hand tip, partly turned toward the door, she did this quickly. There was so much movement in the room that her swinging herself between the chairs while the discussion went on disconcerted no one.

"It's your mother," Owen whispered, as soon as she

reached him. "She sent me for you. She's had a stroke —or something."

Though her face grew serious, she was not unduly perturbed. "Then it must be Danny," she said, in a matter-of-course tone.

"I—I think it is."

"Well, you stay here," she continued, with the same evenness, "and get warmed up, and I'll go back to the house."

"Oh, but I'll go with you."

"No, stay. I'll get Mrs. Gassaway ——"

"I got her. She's there already."

"Then you'd be in our way till we get her to bed. She's been like this before—the last time Danny . . . I know exactly what to do for her. But we'd rather have the house to ourselves for an hour or two—I mean Mrs. Gassaway and me—till everything's done."

When she had gone Owen sat down because he wanted to get warm. But he found at once that to be anywhere away from the little brick house or the New Netherlands Garage was in itself a novelty. Cut off from everything social or intellectual, he was in a prison not made with hands as barred as that which had been. Here for the first time in months, he might have said in years, he heard people talking on something in which they were interested, and airing ideas which, even if valueless, had value to themselves.

If Katy had been waiting for some such seeming accident as this to bring him to the Sinners' Conference, he never knew it. He never knew that she had a method in dealing with him, or, rather, a method in

not dealing with him, because the good Lord, as she had expressed it to his mother, had him in hand already. To the best of her power she saw that he had a roof to shelter him, a bed to sleep in, and such poor comfort as her means enabled her to provide for him, and for which he could pay. All the rest she left to the good Lord, watching for any small thing she could do, but not thrusting herself in. But this he didn't know, and never knew, and so could take the Sinners' Conference as in some way his own discovery.

But apart from getting warm and being in company with other human beings, he had no perception of discovering anything. Whatever observations he made sprang purely from curiosity. Though a discussion was going on, he did not at first attend to what was being said, looking only from one individual to another. In general they were of the types he was used to seeing in the subways. A few Jews, a few Slavs, two or three swarthy Italians or Greeks, he wasn't sure which, a scattering of the conglomerate races which for want of a better term we group together as Anglo-Saxons. Seated separately, and yet apart from all the rest, were one Hindoo and one Japanese, decently dressed in Occidental clothes. One ill-begotten young fellow, dark-featured, stunted, with a cut-throat face, hung on the outskirts of the gathering and never took off a stable-boy's cap set back on a shock of black curls. Two respectable colored people, a man and a woman, sat side by side, listening attentively, though saying nothing. All were of the hard-working type, with the possible exception of one elderly, neat, clean-shaven

man, who might have been a college professor gone to the bad. A few chewed gum or tobacco; at intervals the boy who kept on his cap spat on the floor, but politely, and close beside his feet, so as not to incommode his neighbors. There was a good deal of coughing and clearing of throats, as well as some giggling, which did not, however, interfere with the speakers. Now and then the speakers threatened to get out of hand, two or three giving tongue at once; but a tap of the chairman's gavel, and a few gentle words, were enough to disentangle the *mêlée* and leave a single talker in possession of the floor.

That from the millions in New York, and from the teeming trotters up and down Lafayette Street, there could be found this handful to gather and talk about serious things was a phenomenon Owen would have found more strange had he not seen the same thing in Bitterwell. Out of the twelve or fifteen hundred prisoners there were always some twenty or thirty who tried to use their minds. And in the chained life that was nominally free there was doubtless something like the same proportion. Into this grimy little hall they drifted together, God alone knew how, from God alone knew where, to solve God alone knew what kinds of problems. He judged that they were people who either had ideas, or who yearned for ideas, or who were starving for ideas, or who were driven by some impulse, subconscious and obscure, to fight against atrophy of mind. Atrophy of mind he sometimes thought was the most devastating national disease. Better to think wrongly than not to think at all. As he listened to one

and another he could tell that they were thinking wrongly—how should they think otherwise, with their lack of education and opportunity?—but they were feeling after something they could not express, as perhaps they could not comprehend it, and that in itself was a way of making use of the spark in them that was divine.

Owen caught on to the discussion at the point where a bluff elderly man, with sandy hair and a gnarled, red, Scottish face, who might have been a sailor, was saying in a reasoning tone: "Ah don't see how anyone can say there's noo pairsonal deevil when the Lord says in the Good Book, 'Ah saw Satan as lightnin' fall from heaven.' If he wasn't a pairson, hoo could he fall?"

"Can anyone answer that?" asked the man in the chair.

A silence was broken by a sweet, clear, feminine voice, of distinct enunciation and correct language, speaking with the easy fluency of one inspired. The woman was pale, tense, and plainly in possession of an experience she wanted to communicate: "I can't answer the gentleman, but I'd like to say that I've seen the same thing. I'm psychic. I see visions. I don't go into trances or anything like that. I just shut my eyes, and the most amazing things are revealed to me. If anyone was to write them down they'd make a wonderful book. And one day when I was waiting for what the Lord would show me I saw the walls of heaven, built of brightness, and yet with color in the brightness like the color of rubies and emeralds and amethysts. Then on the battlements I saw a figure, immense and glorious. He, too,

was made of light, and yet of light more living than the light that built the walls. And suddenly, as he stood there majestically poised, some unseen power hurled him headlong, and he fell through space. As he fell I could follow him; and as I followed him I could see him transformed into one shape of fear coming hard on another. In his descent he took many shapes, each more monstrous than the last, till on reaching the earth he became as it were a ramping and a roaring lion."

She ceased abruptly. Another brief silence followed. Then the Hindoo spoke, in a thin, cottony voice, using words of his own coinage, but with the intonation of an Englishman. "Has not the last speaker very well illustrated the state of mind in which the words under discussion were first spoken? Do not all visionastics see in the same way? They shut the eyes to the natural world because optemical sight is too commonplace. On that mental attitude they see angels ascending on ladders and devils cast down; but we who stare with the eyeballs open—nothing doing."

The neat little man who looked like a college professor gone wrong cleared his throat and nervously expressed himself. "Jesus didn't know what He was talking about. He got off a lot of talk that other men had said before Him, or else it was too foolish for anyone to say at all."

The boy who had kept his cap on surprised everyone by jerking out, in a mucker's voice, "Aw, gwan!"

A poor weazened woman of the dressmaking type said in a high voice: "I don't believe in no devil and

no hell. I don't believe in no sin, either. That's all bogey talk, got up by priests to extend their power."

A groan came from a big bearded fellow who sat bending over, his elbow on his knee and his chin in his black hairy hand. "If the lady had ever had the horrors she'd believe in sin and devils, all right. Them that don't acknowledge sin is them that ain't tempted to commit it, which I surmise the lady ain't."

The next speaker stood up, a weedy young man, impelled by a desire to confess himself forensically. "I commit sins all right, all right. There's one awful sin I commit 'most every day. What's the good o' telling me there ain't a devil, when I know there is? He's at me all the time. I don't want to do half the transgressions I'm guilty of; but he drives me. Many's the time I just have to drag myself up to transgress ——"

"But you drags yourself," a gay, mocking voice broke in. "We all know that kind. Been there ourselves."

In spite of the laugh that went up, the sinner stood his ground. "Whether I'm this or that ain't the point under discrimination. The point is whether or not there's a devil. If there ain't, and all this evil comes right out o' me, then I must be a long sight worse'n I think I am ——"

"May *be!*" the gay, mocking voice broke in again. "Guess it's the same with us all."

The laugh going round again, the discouraged young man sat down. More talk of the same sort followed, disjointed, inconsequential, but a relief to the speakers. Sometimes it wandered crazily away, but in general it

kept to the subject in hand quite as closely as you would find among members of Parliament or Congress. When all had expressed themselves who were moved by a wish to do so, the chairman himself undertook to say a word. He merely leaned forward, his arms on the table in front of him.

"It's odd that this subject should come up this evening, because it's one of which I happen to have been thinking for some little time past. I may even say that I've studied it, and perhaps you won't mind hearing what it means to me. Of course I don't ask you to agree with me; but as we're all contributing something, I may as well do my share."

Not till he began to speak did Owen really look at the man. He seemed to be about sixty, well knit, self-possessed, neatly clad. The head, with plenty of iron-gray hair, was set on his shoulders in a poise of quiet command. Of the face he could only say that it was mellow, the face of a man who had been through deep and bitter experiences, but had worked out to a place of peace. Owen would have called it a scholarly face, only that any conception he had of a scholar was incongruous with this gathering. He couldn't think of a scholar having the patience to listen to the poor, foolish stuff aired that evening.

The voice, too, was mellow. "For a good many years that saying of Jesus of Nazareth was to me almost without a meaning. I was inclined to agree with the speaker who suspected some kind of vision seen with the eyes shut. But I left the subject alone as too

difficult for me, or perhaps for anyone else, to understand."

In tones at once high and guttural the Japanese student asked, "Do not you think that we should contemplate things in the face?"

"I do; but with so much to contemplate in the face I had to leave this point till something demanded that I should make up my mind as to what it meant. For personal reasons which I need not go into that only happened recently." He paused for a minute, changing his tone. "As I see it, the whole meaning turns on the way in which we understand the word heaven. Has anybody anything to say on that point?"

"I don't believe in no heaven, nor harps, nor palm branches, nor none of that stuff," declared the advanced woman who had disclaimed belief in sin and hell. "That's just bogey talk got up by priestcraft."

"Aw, gwan!" came again from the boy with the stable cap, who was plainly conservative.

The fallen professor expressed himself once more: "They say that heaven's up in the sky. Now science tells us that the sky is just made of air. And in the air there's worlds. It's all different kinds of worlds, just as far as you can see. The moon's a world. The stars is worlds. Even the sun's a world—kind of. Where you goin' to put your heaven in? There can't be a heaven, 'cos there's no room for it. I'm all for science."

"Heaven is speritial," was the opinion of the young man with the impulse to confess. "Speritial things don't take room. There's sperits all about in the air

everywhere, both good sperits and bad, only you can't see them. No microscope and no telescope don't help you a mite. What you givin' us with your science? It ain't science if it contradicks the Bible."

"It ain't a true Bible if it contradicts science, I'll say," the professor contended. "The Bible's nothin' but an old, ancient, antiquated collection of myths and lies, made up by people who didn't have the chance to learn what we know nowadays. Science is new; it's the latest thing out; you can't beat it. Don't Bible me when it comes to scholarship and scientific people and all that."

The Hindoo's tone was that of the reasonable thinker. "There remains to investigate the hypothesis that heaven is the invented discovery of those troublesome lives who long ardently for a static state of peace and nothing to do. Who can chastise them if they forecast a little idleness when they get sick and die? It is very understandable and intelligent. But we that have got the light in our eyes, we don't ask for no such bromide, but can lower ourselves into the grave without an antidote."

The bearded, black-browed sinner who still sat with his figure bent, and his elbow on his knee, groaned again. "What's the use o' me fightin' sin, and especially drink, and sometimes bein' victorious, if I got no place to go to when I die? There's folks that says they don't want to play no harp and wear no white clothes, but I tell 'em that it's better'n burning in a lake of fire and brimstone, all righty. I ain't strong on playin' a harp, either, but what I say is beggars mustn't be choosers;

and if playin' a harp is all I can do, well, *hand* me the harp and I'll do my best on it and there can't be no science against it."

"When you've been a sinner," said an elderly man, who himself seemed to have sinned on a considerable scale, "it don't do to give orders about what you want; you just have to take what you'll get. What's the use o' gassin' and sayin' you don't believe in this and you don't want to think you'll get that, when you don't know nothin' about it? Why not do the best you can, and then wait and take your medicine, whether it's sweet or bitter?"

"There's a good deal in that," the chairman said, quietly. "I don't think any of us is in a position to lay down the law and say that God must do thus and so, or that he must do anything at all. It's quite right that we should try to think things out and to form our own opinions; but it's wrong to suppose that our opinions are the only ones and that we must force them on other people. It's always possible that we see some of the truth, and that our neighbor, who doesn't agree with us at all, sees something that we miss. That's the value of discussion like this. Each one of us who has anything to say can say it, while the rest of us can weigh it and consider how much there is in it that we can accept."

That this attempt at tolerance was appreciated was evident from a round of applause.

"Now I don't have to conceal from any of you that in my whole view of life and the world I try to see through the glasses of Jesus Christ. That is, I try to get his mind on whatever the subject may be, and

especially when that subject springs out of something he himself has said, as it does this evening. And to get his idea of heaven is something I've long been trying to do. He speaks of it very often. It seems to me that a Kingdom of Heaven is what he came to preach and to reveal. One of his first recorded messages is, 'Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Repentance, according to the exact word he used, means not remorse, but a deliberate change in the point of view. The experience isn't emotional; it's mental, a step we take because reason prompts us. A man, for instance, has been drinking and finds it doesn't get him anywhere. Then he decides to give it up and live soberly. That's repentance. He's doing the right thing instead of the wrong thing, in order to make something of his life. Now that, it seems to me, is the first condition laid down by Jesus Christ as to our entering into what he calls the Kingdom of Heaven."

Owen noticed, what he had often noticed at Bitterwell, the spell which seemed to be laid on the hearers the minute the speaker began to talk of Jesus Christ.

"But I observe one big difference between his view of heaven and ours. To us heaven means first of all something after death; to him it means something right now. You can read the gospels from end to end and hardly find in them anything about any world but this. On the subject of a heaven after death He is all but silent. On that of preparing for a life after death He is all but silent, too. By far the greater part of His gospel deals with how to live this life; and heaven, as He views it, is a condition which we can realize

right here in New York, right here in Lafayette Street, or anywhere else we please."

A voice demanded, with some indignation, "Well, what's all this about not goin' to heaven till we die?"

"To my mind that's misunderstanding and misinterpretation. We've been pretty strong on that ever since the religion of Christ was presented to the world. We're a childish race, you know, we human beings, and whenever we can we make for ourselves a childish religion. There's been a great deal of childishness in the way we've taken the teachings of Christ. We've read into them a lot that he never meant, and we've paid no attention to a lot that he did mean. His big test was in doing the right thing; we've tried to dodge doing the right thing by putting in its place all sorts of outward acts which to him can't mean anything. And we've done exactly that with what he tells us about heaven. He says that by doing right we enter into heaven now. We don't want to do right, so we say, 'I'll do wrong now, then I'll be sorry for it, then I'll be forgiven, and so I'll go to heaven when I die.' That is, we don't want heaven now, because there's no place for doing wrong in it. Given the choice between having heaven and doing wrong, we prefer doing wrong. At the same time we don't want to give up the hope of going to heaven some day, so we postpone it to a time when, as we suppose, the possibility of doing wrong will be over."

"Then," said the Japanese student, choosing his words carefully, "you would argument that heaven is not a place, but a state of mind."

"I would rather say a condition. It's the condition of everything as the Universal Father wills it to be. Whatever God is, and however you or I understand him to be, we're probably agreed that in his presence everything is right. It is not conceivable that wrong and God could exist together. The great damage done by doing wrong is that we create what we can only call a kind of blackness between ourselves and God. With anything between ourselves and God then we don't get the good that God wants us to have. We're not in heaven; we're in this world, with its misery and wretchedness. When Christ speaks of this world with a special emphasis he means the kind of life we can lead in this world, entirely, or almost entirely, away from God. But I'll ask you to notice something in the Lord's Prayer. After the first brief prayer that we may honor God—*Hallowed be thy name*—the first thing we're told to ask for is that God's Kingdom may be established; and then we go right on to see *how* it can be established: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* That is, he seems to be saying to us, 'Do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven and you will bring in God's Kingdom. If you bring in God's Kingdom, then you will find that the things you so long for will be yours. Crime, poverty, hatred, and everything evil will gradually be overcome. In other words, God has prepared only good things for his own, if they'll just take the trouble to earn them."

"Yes, but who can?" a woman asked, in a discontented tone. "Most of us do some things right, and more things wrong. Seems to me that if we don't bring

in the whole Kingdom of God it's as much as to say we don't get anything."

"I think we've every ground for assuming that nothing we do right is ever thrown away. In the Sermon on the Mount—in speaking of our worries over what we shall eat and drink and wear—he says that these things will be added unto us if we *seek* the Kingdom and righteousness. We must seek. He doesn't say we sha'n't get them till we *find*. So I think we may take for granted that in every right thing we do we bring in the Kingdom to that extent—we enter into heaven as far as that one thing will take us. The next may take us farther. The cup of cold water given in his name by no means loses its reward. But naturally the more we do that's right, the richer the reward will be."

"Yes," some one complained, who had been silent hitherto, "but that's not tellin' us about the devil."

"I haven't forgotten that. I wanted only to plant the idea of heaven as simply that condition in which the will of God is done. That condition can exist right here. And the more that will is done the fewer the ills we shall have to complain of. When that will is done perfectly we shall have no ills at all. Now let us go back to the words our friend over there quoted a little while ago, 'I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' The Master uttered these words when the seventy disciples whom he had sent out came back with the report, 'The very devils are subject unto us in thy name.' I must point out here that it was a time in history when the tendency to personify what we call

qualities was greater than it is today. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, all the races, populated the unseen with good and evil spirits. That is always done by peoples of low spiritual development. You'll find it even now among the Eskimos and the Central Africans. The Hebrews of that day didn't differ from their neighbors; and if Christ accepted their phraseology it was because he was obliged to speak to them in terms they could understand."

The Scotch sailor who had raised the issue said, testily: "It's a puir kind o' religion you'd be leavin' us if we had no deevil."

"Oh, I'm not taking your devil away from you. If it's necessary for you to believe in him, do so by all means. But it seems to me clear that the Kingdom of Heaven preached by Jesus is a condition from which evil has been banished. If we ventured to put his words into our own language it might be something like this: 'With the speed of the speediest thing we know anything about I saw the whole idea of evil go out of our thought and life.' That is, the nearer we can come to doing right the less need we have to set up evil as another kind of God. In the Kingdom of Heaven, where God reigns, Satan can have no place. And if God reigns anywhere he must reign everywhere; so that there's no room for Satan in God's universe. It isn't just a question as to whether there's a personal devil or not; we might leave that to people who like to discuss things that don't matter; it's one of the admissions of evil as a force created by God. The good news of Jesus Christ was to the effect that there's a

heaven here and now in which evil doesn't exist, and that the effort to do right is the ticket into it."

To his great astonishment Owen heard himself speaking. "You say, sir, that in the Kingdom of Heaven the things we long for will be given us."

"In that Kingdom fully realized, yes; and in proportion as it *is* realized, even when not realized fully."

"But suppose the thing a man longs for and tries to achieve is an evil in itself? What then?"

He could see the kind eyes rest on him a minute before the answer was given. "Then I can only say that for that man Satan has not fallen, but is still enthroned. What he's seeking is not the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Kingdom of Hell."

"Thank you."

But with the words Owen got up and went out.

In the subway station as he waited for a train he purchased, as he often did, a weekly called *Round the Town*, which dealt in personalities concerning people of importance. It was his only means of learning anything of those with whom he had grown up. The information thus supplied him was not always authentic, and less often was it in good taste, but at least it told him who was dead and who was alive, and what they were up to. Now and then there was a mention of Gwennie and her *fiancé*, of Blandina Frankland, or of Wrig Coppard, and once there was a paragraph which actually coupled their names. He gloated over this because it brought his revenge the nearer. All he asked was that she should marry him—and find him out.

As the train came in he thrust the publication into his pocket and took his seat. Then as he rattled up town the words *Satan as lightning—Satan as lightning* —jigged in his memory to the grinding of the wheels. They beat a rhythm; they became a sing-song. By and by the tune changed to *the Kingdom of Hell—the Kingdom of Hell—the Kingdom of Hell*—as the cars jolted to another beat. He had dismissed the subject he heard debated—if debate it could be called—as soon as he shut the door of the hall behind him. But the phrases remained, haunting his subconsciousness.

Arrived at the little brick house, his first question to Katy was, "How is Mrs. Bird?"

Katy replied that her mother was in bed and that her condition was not serious. She would be all right again in a day or two. When Danny had last been arrested she had had the same kind of shock, but the effect didn't last.

"But he hasn't been arrested this time?"

She was swinging herself from one part of the kitchen to another, in the process of tidying up. "No, but I suppose he soon will be. He's gone off with our six silver spoons. They were the only things we had of any value. My father bought 'em when my mother and him were married—they had more money then—and poor mother was fond of them. She was proud of 'em, too; and whenever a stranger'd come in, like you when you was first here and had your meals with us . . . " A sob choked her, but, mastering it, she went on again: "Poor Danny didn't mean to hurt her—I know that—but the time had come when he just couldn't

hold out any longer against his light-fingering. It's a disease with him. . . . "

Of his own loss Owen said nothing, going upstairs and putting his hand once more in the nest, to make sure it was empty. He couldn't bring himself to echo her poor Danny, or to lessen the thief's responsibility by ascribing his crime to congenital disease.

Lying in his cot with the oil-lamp on a chair, he glanced over the weekly purchased in the subway. Greedy to catch sight of the names in which he was interested, he skipped hastily from paragraph to paragraph till at last he came on one of them. It was to the effect that among a gay party which had gone to Quebec for the winter sports was Mr. Wrigley Coppard. After naming the others who had taken part in this outing there came the following broad hint: "It is whispered that after sowing his wild oats this handsome young giant is about to settle down in the immemorial manner, and that a certain charming and wealthy young widow, living not a hundred miles from Sutton Place, will be an interested party in the settling. Society has long been on tiptoe for the announcement of the engagement, and we understand on excellent authority that it will be made very soon." Having read this twice, Owen clenched his teeth in an anguish that ended in a grin. Then he put out the light and turned his face to the cold unplastered wall.

But he couldn't sleep. The sing-song began again: *Satan as lightning—Satan as lightning—Satan as lightning—the Kingdom of Hell—the Kingdom of Hell —the Kingdom of Hell*—till he rolled over again on his

back. Oddly enough, instead of Wrig Coppard and Blandina Frankland he saw the chairman of the meeting, the Hindoo, the Japanese, the Scotch sailor, the pinched woman who denied, like the Sadducees, the existence of angel or devil, heaven or hell. They carried his mind back to Bitterwell, and the struggle of submerged souls to rise into the world of ideas, like the agonized effort of flies to climb up the sides of a basin out of the water in which they will drown. Only at Bitterwell there had been no chairman mellow of mind and sympathy.

Who was he? Why did he give himself and his time to listen to these artless reflections, and treat them as deserving of attention? After all, there was common sense in what he had said. If there was a Kingdom of Heaven it was here and now; and if it was here and now there must be a way of entering into it. And what other way could there be than that of doing right? When all was said and done, was not that the last distillation of the wisdom of mankind? Search ages and sages, philosophers, churchmen, and scientists, and could you find any more penetrating test of character than, "By their fruits ye shall know them"?

That there was this Kingdom of Heaven here and now he considered probable. Indeed it was the only conclusion, it seemed to him, consistent with common sense. To sentence us to a life of wretchedness while on this planet, and to postpone prosperity and happiness till after death, had long seemed to him unworthy of a Creator. Not that he had thought the matter out; it was only that when the assumption had been made,

in church or elsewhere, his spirit had rejected it. If there was such a God as teachers of religion declared, his own father among them, he surely could never have been guilty of any such stupid injustice.

That was as far as he had ever gone—till now. Now that which had hitherto been only a vague concept became all at once definite and visible. That is, it was visible to the inner eye. The Kingdom of Heaven was right there, in the loft where he was lying. Its door was open; he had only to walk in. He had only to see Satan as lightning fall from heaven, leaving nothing but good to be done by himself, Owen Hesketh, and he would be admitted. It would of course be a struggle to keep his place there, but it could be done. There came back into his mind a verse of a psalm he had sung as a choir boy: "Thou art a place to hide me in; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt keep me secretly in thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues." That had been an early premonition of a state to which Jesus had given a name.

Another quotation occurred to him, words with which he had been familiar since boyhood, without ever having given them a meaning: "I am the Door. By me, if any man enter he shall go in and out and find pasture." Of this he saw now the significance. Using the Christ-way of life, you went in where not merely all you needed was supplied you—that was only incidental—but where you had the satisfaction which everything must find in fulfilling its exact function. He himself had no such satisfaction because he never had fulfilled his. As son, as brother, as member of the body social

and politic, he had been as a wheel in a machine which, when it is expected to turn one way, turns the other and so puts everything else out of order. As far as it had been possible for him to affect other lives he had disrupted the machine, and disrupted himself especially. At a time when he might have been a useful and honorable citizen he was an ex-convict, washing cars for a living, hiding for shame's sake from everyone he cared about, and sleeping in a garret. The material part of this was unimportant except as it implied a downfall.

Yet even now the Door stood open—and he could go in.

But he didn't want to. He had no hesitation whatever in giving this answer to himself. If he entered the Kingdom of Heaven he would have to leave his hatred of Wrig Coppard outside, and that he couldn't do. He illustrated aptly what that chairman had said; given the choice between the Kingdom of Heaven and doing wrong, he preferred doing wrong.

As to that he made no attempt to deceive himself. It was probable that his training as a boy had been too thorough to allow of sophistication as to the distinction between good and evil. He knew what it was, to his own satisfaction, at any rate, not by argument but by instinct. Plausible modern theories turning black into white made no appeal to him. If in refusing the Kingdom of Heaven he chose automatically that of Hell he did it with his eyes open. He did it saying that it would be worth it—to him. If he still had a function to fulfill it was in hating Wrig Coppard, whether any-

thing ever came of it or not. It was possible that Blandina might marry him and never find him out. It was possible that he might live a respected life and go down to an honored grave. What was not possible was that he, Owen Hesketh, should give over hating him; and just for the luxury of that hatred he was willing to forfeit everything, including his soul's welfare.

Having put this determination beyond revision, he at last fell asleep.

Not till the weather was moderating toward spring did Tiddy Epps again approach Owen on the subject of going to old man Coppard with a view to getting the money still owing him by Wrig. "Way I see it is this," Tiddy declared, as he again sat in the office with his feet on the desk: "Wrig didn't pay me the four hundred and fifty when he had the grand in his pocket, same as you, for fear it'd be traced as his part of the swag when you and him cashed that check."

"What makes you think he ever had anything to do with the check? I never said so."

"No, but I just think he did. Kind o' come to me. And if I did go to old man Coppard and tell him that ——"

"Well—what?"

"Might kick me out."

"But there's no reason why you should tell him anything but what you know. What you know is that when I paid you the four hundred and fifty I said that

Wrig Coppard was going to do the same, and that the rest of our debt we hoped to settle later."

"Yeah, that's so; that's what you did say."

"And that's all you've got to repeat. Just tell him that when I paid you four hundred and fifty I told you that Wrig had another four hundred and fifty ready to plank down. But I was arrested and Wrig hung fire. You can tell him, too, if you like, that of the four hundred I still owe you I'm paying you five a week and hope to have the whole thing cleared off in the course of two years. But if you do say that, don't, for Heaven's sake, let him know anything about me. You don't know where I live, and so you can't give him my address, but make him think that the five a week comes to you through a third party."

Though Tiddy agreed to this, more weeks went by without his doing anything.

It was without his doing anything because Selma pointed out a trap he might be laying for himself unwittingly. If Tiddy were to take this step old man Coppard might discover that his son had had a part in a forgery. "And folks," Selma reasoned, "don't like any the better the folks that bring 'em information of disgrace. The Coppards are rich, and your game as the owner of a garadge is to keep in with rich people. Gettin' into their bad books might queer you. This Wrig, by all you tell me about him, is a nasty guy, and might do you an ugly turn. It don't do to step on a wildcat just because he's asleep."

Though Tiddy pooh-poohed this argument and declared that he wouldn't hesitate to step on Wrig Cop-

pard even if he was a sleeping rattlesnake, he nevertheless waited for further backing from Owen before going on with the mission.

As an old and intimate friend Blandina had been invited to inspect Gwennie Hesketh's trousseau. The linen lay in gleaming piles on the bed, on chairs, on temporary tables, trestle-legged, in the spare bedroom. Mrs. Hesketh and Gwennie acted as guides.

"The best things come from Roope's," the mother of the bride explained; "but some of the things we've had done in the house."

Blandina picking up one thing after another, and giving little cries of admiration, declared that it all might have come from Roope's, and that if there was a difference she liked the simpler things the better. "Who on earth have you got?"

"Oh, the quaintest creature. She's here today. I must tell you about her. She's a good woman, too, and—and such a comfort she's been to me. I really love to sit with her, just to hear her ideas. She says she isn't religious, and yet sometimes she makes me feel that I never heard of religion before."

There are women who love linen, just as there are other women who love flowers, and others still who love jewels. Blandina was one of the first. She had jewels, but she didn't love them; flowers in her personal experience were expensive decorations ordered from a florist; but linen was something with which to live in close association, and it seemed to her that she could never have enough of it. In design, texture, sheen, in that *patina*

which comes to pearls from contact with the human body and to wood from the touch of human hands, above all in its whiteness on whiteness, its purity, its utter cleanliness, it appealed to the freshness and honesty of a nature which the artificial could not spoil. Listening to Mrs. Hesketh's account of the curious way in which Katy Bird had dropped down among them, she went from pile to pile, examining with the eye of a loving connoisseur.

And just as Mrs. Hesketh had finished her account a stumping was heard along the hall, and the lame woman came in with another dozen doilies. "This is Miss Bird, Blandina," Gwennie said, smiling, adding to Katy, "Mrs. Frankland has been admiring your work tremendously."

Blandina sat down, looking at Katy through screwed-up eyes as she had a habit of doing for close scrutiny. "Yes, indeed I have. I love work like yours. I've tried to do it myself, but I'm not a bit of good at it."

Katy smiled respectfully. "Oh, it's just practice, madam. If you had to do it for a living you'd learn it soon enough."

"Should I? I wonder. Very likely I should. Not to have to work for a living isn't half the fun it's supposed to be."

"It's a gift to be able to live at all without work, isn't it, madam? It'd kill me; but then there's lots of you ladies can swing it as easy as I turn a hem. It must be what you're called to."

"I don't believe it is—not in my case. I'm a worker—only I've no work."

"I've always heard, madam, that rich ladies often find work that poorer women can't do."

"Oh, I know. Some of the wealthiest women in New York are the busiest."

Mrs. Hesketh sank to the edge of the bed which was otherwise covered with linen; Gwennie leaned over the footboard. Katy stood in the middle of the room, her left shoulder hunched by the crutch, her left foot hanging some ten inches off the floor.

"And they do a lot o' good," Katy commended.

"Yes, but I'm not one of them. Oh, I've tried. They put me on committees every now and then, but I notice they never do it the second time. I'm just so much dead wood." She continued with a wistful, twisted smile: "I did hope once that I'd found something I *had* to do—but it just came and went."

Mrs. Hesketh and Gwennie supposed the reference to be to her life with Wally Frankland, but Katy suspected something else. Though in such confidences as he had made to her Owen had never mentioned names, he had not outwitted her capacity for putting two and two together. Long ago she had inferred that the friend he now hated was Wrigley Coppard. Herself a reader of *Round the Town*, she had seen that between this Mr. Coppard and a certain Mrs. Frankland there was gossip as to an engagement. From Owen she had extracted just one clue, but that had been enough. "Was you never in love?" she had asked him, in the hope of some such reply as, "Not really." But he had

only said, "Once—for all." "What's become of her?" Katy had persisted. "Married another fellow. Killed in the war. Now she's going to marry some one else." And from this she had drawn her conclusions.

With this secret knowledge she threw off adroitly: "Perhaps it didn't come and go. It might have just hung off like because—because madam wasn't ready for it yet."

"If readiness means willingness ——"

"Oh, but it don't. The man at the meetings I go to in Lafayette Street—I've told Mrs. Hesketh about him—he says we often want to rush in on jobs before we know how to handle 'em. He says it was that way with Moses."

Blandina looked both blank and amused. "Moses? What's he got to do with it?"

"The man says that he wanted to lead the people out of Egypt before he was fit to do it. So the Lord sent him off for forty years in the desert, with nothing to do but keep sheep. He says that Moses probably thought that his life was over, and that he'd die nothin' better'n a shepherd. He says the times when we feel ourselves laid by, and of no more use to anyone, is often the times when we're fillin' up like, to be ready for a new job—when it comes."

"But suppose it never comes?"

"The man says it always does—if we get ourselves ready. He says that those who the Lord don't employ are those who wouldn't be of use to him."

Blandina's next question brought Katy's heart to her

mouth, as she expressed the sensation to herself. "Do you go out by the day?"

"Yes, madam."

"Have you a day you could give me?"

"I've Wednesdays, madam. That's my only day."

"Could you give me that for the next three months? I don't go away till June."

"Oh, madam, yes; I'd love to."

Blandina had at once kept her promise to Mrs. Coppard of inviting Serena Johnson to dinner, but that popular young lady was engaged. A second invitation found her about to make a flying trip to Paris. Not till her return was the undertaking really carried out. But in the meanwhile Blandina had done not a little searching of heart.

In the first place, her unwillingness to let Wrig Coppard slip through her fingers had surprised herself. The suggestion that the only one of her suitors who possessed any attraction for herself should be carried off by another woman had roused in her the dog-in-the-manger instinct. She would have denied a spirit so ungenerous, and yet she had it as spontaneously as breath. But she had it sportingly. She would give Serena Johnson every opportunity. Whenever she saw her she praised Wrig Coppard; what was more to the purpose, whenever she saw Wrig Coppard she praised Serena Johnson; but while each of the two indorsed this commendation, neither betrayed the symptoms she was looking for. Though that was so far so good, it

was not so good as to do away with the necessity for showing Wrig special attentions.

Showing Wrig special attentions, she was bound to find herself more involved with him. That was a disadvantage, and yet a disadvantage not without compensation. She was so lonely; her life was so pointless. To return each night from a dinner or the theater and find nothing but an empty flat began to be more and more appalling. To lock the door when the last of her guests had departed, and turn back to the deserted rooms, often found her on the edge of tears. "I can't live alone," she would say to herself, despairingly, and so the question would arise, "With whom, then, am I to live?"

She could have lived with Owen Hesketh. That mutual drawing to each other had been in her life the one supreme matter-of-course. From the time when they were growing boy and girl she had felt that, in spite of his deviltries, he was the other part of her, and she the other part of him. That he would outlive his lawless days she was sure, though as long as her father was there she had to hide the conviction. But no sooner was she free than the avalanche had fallen, crushing her heart in its progress. Since then that heart had had only the same powers of revival as a tree when the snow-slide has melted. It lived, but it lived feebly, with leaves shriveled before unfolding from the bud.

On her lover's sentence and imprisonment Blandina's recoil was less from him than from the tragedy. She didn't know what to make of it. Except for her father's

veto on Owen, everything hitherto in life had gone her own way. Now, almost without warning, that way had been blasted in front of her. She was twenty-three, an orphan, without near relations, her closest adviser a trustee. Even the poor satisfaction of sharing the calamity was denied to her. Not a soul in the world beyond Owen and herself knew that she was involved in it more than as a spectator. Any decision she had to make she had to make secretly, just as she had loved secretly. As a matter of fact, however, such decisions were few, seeing that to her one letter to him in his downfall Owen made no reply. This she took to be the end of the end, and in sheer desperation married Wally Frankland.

What she hoped for on Owen's release she didn't explain to herself, for the reason that she didn't know. But she did know that if he were to come to her again. . . .

Not till this dream was definitely past did she begin to feel herself adrift in the world, superfluous, without a reason for existing. Self-sufficient, she needed an outlet for her self-sufficiency. Independent, she needed something to support. For love the necessity was less urgent, seeing that her capacity for loving had received such a blow. In that respect sympathy, she now felt, would be enough for her, with strong arms to wrap her round. This at least Wrig Coppard would be able to give her, and—she repeated it again—all she knew of him was in his favor.

So when Serena Johnson came to dinner she asked him to be early on the spot in order to act as host.

She bade him take Serena in, put her on his right, and look after the men when the ladies retreated to the drawing-room. In such duties as these Wrig was at his best, not only contributing a handsome presence, but infecting the table with jollity by the subdued rumble of his laugh.

With Serena Johnson he was just as he was with any other girl. Misgiving on that score being at an end, she acknowledged the skill with which Mrs. Coppard had maneuvered. At the same time she was aware of a trace of disappointment, scarcely more than subconscious, in a too easy victory. To have won back his straying fancy would have given her more zest. As it was she was only getting what nobody else wanted, but as she thought she wanted it herself, it was foolish to demur on that account. She knew she risked unhappiness, but she would have risked that with Owen Hesketh. Risk was a large part of her incitement in doing anything.

The dinner went off brilliantly, and very much thanks to Wrig. With the last of the guests to depart—two old and intimate friends of Blandina's—he too got ready to say good night. Blandina accompanied them to the lift, but as it arrived a discussion arose, nobody knew how, between herself and Wrig. The lift waited till somebody else rang for it. Then, not to detain it too long, the two old friends went down.

Left alone with him on the landing, Blandina said at once: "I'm so much obliged to you, Wrig. It all went off very well, and it was you who gave it the go. I think Serena enjoyed herself."

"I know I did," he replied, in his deepest bass.

"I thought you would. That's why I got you to take her in. She's so awfully nice, don't you think?"

"What I enjoyed was looking at you from the other end of the table. That blue-and-green thing you've got on is stunning."

Now that they were by themselves, she had a helpless sense of not knowing what to say to him. She was not often shy nowadays, but shyness suddenly overtook her. "Is it?" she stammered, and could add no more.

"Only instead of pearls you ought to wear emeralds and sapphires with it."

"I don't think I ever saw the combination."

"It's mysterious and—what's the word you're always seeing in books?—ineffable."

"I should think it might be."

"Would you like to see something of the sort?"

"Oh, some day."

"I could bring you a little thing tomorrow—and show you." His voice sank to its softest and profoundest note, more than ever like that of the Russian priest in the church in the rue Daru. "It would be a ring." The note became a deep and scarcely audible vibrancy which thrilled her. "May I?"

Her own voice was scarcely more audible than his. "If you like."

He came nearer to what he meant. "How shall I know the size?"

Slipping off one of the simpler rings she was wearing, she handed it to him silently.

"May I come again tomorrow evening?"

She nodded.

"And may I tell my father and mother?"

She nodded again.

"And may they tell—everybody else?"

He was obliged to read the motion of her lips to be sure of what she said. "I suppose so."

For once in her life she felt herself paralyzed, without thought, sensation, or volition. All she could do was to stand like a victim, while two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

Then he caught her in his arms. The embrace was so strong, so immense, that she felt herself smothered, blotted out in it. Not only was she held, she was swallowed up. She allowed it to envelop her because at last she seemed to have found a refuge from her inner solitude. With such kisses as these, on her hair, on her eyelids, on her mouth, she knew that her life was again linked up with another life, and that even if it didn't bring her happiness she would at least get the drama which comes from the conflict of wills. That in itself would be a rescue from a futile and vacuous monotony.

By the time he had left her she was so exhausted that she went to bed and slept dreamlessly; but in the morning she was not refreshed. If she didn't regret what she had done it was because she considered it the only thing. "I can't live alone. With whom then can I live?" Certainly not with any of the other men who had asked her to marry them, and if that were the case, what else was she to do?

By the afternoon notes and flowers began to arrive,

proclaiming the fact that Wrig—or more probably his mother—was already busy announcing the engagement. More intimate friends called by telephone, asking when they could come and see her. The feminine excitement always roused by a new mating had the effect of exciting herself. Over her engagement to Wally Frankland there had been no such fuss, since, owing to the war, they had been engaged and married within a week. Now she was to know the social honors of a bride-elect, and she was still girl enough to enjoy them.

In the evening he brought the ring—a sapphire flanked by two emeralds. He was so tender as he put it on, so solicitous and protective, that she was sure now she was going to be happy. The past would be sealed behind her. Even in thought she would try not to return to it again.

But that night she was wakeful. It was the novelty, she told herself, and the crowding of new experiences. The prospect, too, of a new life kept her weaving hopes and alarms into plans and possibilities which fired her brain. To quiet herself, toward two in the morning, she switched on the light and looked for something in the way of a book.

The only thing within reach of her hand was the copy of *Wardle's Magazine*, which had arrived that morning. She continued to subscribe to it because her father had done so, and her grandfather before him. Though it came every month, it was only now and then that she found time to look it over.

But in this number she was struck by a title printed on the cover, the only part of the contents to receive

this mark of importance. *The Convict's View of Justice: by an ex-Convict.*

Always eager nowadays for anything she came across on the subject of prisons and prisoners, she turned at once to the article and began to read.

Part Six

On a morning in the winter, before Owen's return from work and Katy's departure for hers, there occurred the unusual event of the postman's arrival with a letter. What was still more unusual was that the address it bore was J. Owen, Esq., while in the upper left-hand corner was the name of *Wardle's Magazine*. To one who daily "did" Owen's room it was no secret that he had been engaged in writing, and with this in her hand her gift of putting two and two together drew the obvious conclusions. At the risk of being late at Mrs. Frankland's, she waited to hand him the letter herself and to get such information as she might from his startled eyes and the surge of blood to his dark cheeks. Faster than he had ever before run up the narrow stairway he carried the strange thing to his attic.

Some weeks later she received in the same way a packet bearing the inscription, "Printer's Proofs." Naturally, then, she watched the succeeding issues of *Wardle's Magazine* till one appeared on the newsstands which plainly contained what she was looking for. She had read the article, in fact, before Owen had bought his copy, seeing that she had got hers on returning from work in the evening, while he had only spied it in the subway station the next morning. This had allowed her a night of reflection, with time, as she phrased it, to think out a line.

Thinking out a line was the more essential since her mission as she conceived of it was to watch events

develop by their own impulsion. The example of Moses had not been lost on her. No one was so well equipped as she to act the rôle of goddess from the machine, but that was precisely what she was afraid of. She was the more afraid of it, since to keep Owen Hesketh under her roof had become her heart's desire. He was the Impossible, it was true, but just to see the Impossible come and go, and now and then get a word with him, was much in a starveling life.

She got her word with him generally on a Sunday afternoon when he came to pay her his week's lodging. Expecting him, she had, with careful carelessness, left her copy of *Wardle's* lying on the kitchen table, where she was seated preparing something for the supper. Her mother, who had recovered, but only partially, was lying down in her room. His telltale expression did not escape her as, in putting the money down before her, his eye lighted on the magazine.

"Seen that?" She pointed with the knife with which she was peeling a potato.

He might have been answering to an accusation. "Yes."

"Good, isn't it?"

"Oh—some people might—might call it so."

She kept her eyes on the potato, which she held up before her as the skin peeled off in a curl. "You wrote it, didn't you?"

The man whose sin has found him out might have floundered in just his way. "I—I —— Wha-what makes you say that?"

"Oh, I just know. I knew you was writing—some-

thing. And then there's the story in it—just like the one you told me."

"It isn't *just* like. I changed some things so that I shouldn't be recognized too easily."

"Oh, then, so you did write it."

Seeing he was caught, he confessed, lamely.

"And," she repeated, "I call it good."

"I dare say it'll do."

"It'll do more than do. It'll set a lot of people talking."

"I don't believe that."

"I do. And the people who run that magazine do. That's why they put you on the cover. I worked for a woman once whose husband was a writer—Sidebottom, his name was—perhaps you've heard of him—and when he was on the cover of a magazine he'd be tickled pink; but if he was only in among the contents he'd be grouchy as a lion in a zoo."

"Oh, well, I suppose they know their own business."

"You bet they do. But"—she began on another potato while he stood looking down at her—"but I sometimes wonder if you know yours."

"I don't think you need worry about that."

"Well, I do."

"Why?"

"For one thing, because you're so pig-headed."

"Pig-headed—how?"

"We call people pig-headed when they won't go the way they're drove."

"But I should say that that's the very thing I do. I've been driven—this way, and I've gone—this way."

"I suppose you mean by this way, livin' here with us."

"No, not that. Please don't think so. You've been very good to me, and whatever becomes of me I shall never forget it. I mean—what I feel—about the whole business."

"And what's that?"

"I've told you already. You don't need to have me to repeat it."

"Oh, but that was a long while ago. You wasn't writin' for the magazines at that time."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It's got to do with it that it gives you something else to think about."

"But I can think about more things than one."

"You can't pour your life into more things than one If you've got a big purpose you must stick to it. Life ain't long enough or wide enough for two big purposes."

"My big purpose—and the only one I've got—is ——"

"To keep on writin'. I don't know much about writin', but I guess I've read as many books as the next one—there's nothin' I enjoy more'n a good love-story, with plenty of red blood and passion—but, as I say, I may not know much about writin', only I can tell it when I see it. And I can't read that story there without knowin', as well as I know how to peel this potato, that you've got a gift."

In spite of the lack of expert knowledge in this praise Owen was thrilled by it. Except by implication in the honor paid to his article it was the first he had ever

received. Knowing by instinct that she had gained a point, Katy continued:

"The thing I'm afraid of is that by headin' the wrong way—like the pig—you'll spoil your chances."

"Chances at what?"

"At makin' a life for yourself that'll be of some good."

"Some good for myself—or for other people?"

"It's the same thing. You can't have good for yourself that isn't good for other people. If it's only good on one side it isn't good at all."

"The people who—who put me away—thought they were doing good for themselves—but it wasn't good for me."

"You don't know that yet. You can't tell what good it may have done you. I might say that it isn't good for me to be lame—and always in pain—and yet if I wasn't I'd have no more spunk than a wet sponge. It's what we're up against that puts us on our mettle. But if you haven't got the mettle to be put on ——"

"Perhaps I haven't."

"I don't think you've that excuse."

"Excuse for what?"

"For your hard-heartedness—among other things."

"Hard-heartedness toward whom?"

The potato peeling flew as if turned off by machinery. "To your folks. Why don't you go back and see them—just *see* them?"

"What makes you think that they want me?"

"Oh, lots of things. I know."

"You mean, you think. But I think differently."

Before she could respond he said in a tone she had never heard from him, "Do you suppose I wouldn't go back if I could?"

"Then for God's sake, why don't you?"

"Because hard as it may be for them to know nothing about me, it would be harder still to have me about. I've told you already that my sister's being married to a swell—in a few days now ——"

"Why couldn't you do it—after the wedding?"

"What would be the good? They wouldn't know what to make of me—the way I am now. Besides, I should have to earn a living. I couldn't sponge on them any more. And the only thing I know how to do is to wash cars in a garage. I couldn't do that—and be living in my father's house."

"You could write. You must make money by it, or you couldn't have give me that bag—and all the nice things for mother."

"Possibly; but it's a long slow business to get your hand in. In the meantime I must live."

She considered a minute before saying: "Seems to me you're talking different about your folks from what you did at first. You didn't want to have any more to do with them."

"Got over that."

"What made you?"

His reply went through her like a stab. "Seeing you, for one thing."

Merely to work off emotion she began again on a potato. "Seeing me? For mercy's sake—how?"

"How game you are—and up to the scratch—and everything."

Though shaken to the root of her being, she decided that the only way to take this was lightly. With her shrill laugh she threw off: "Well, I sure am glad to've been able to do that much. But now that you've made one change, why can't you go the whole thing?"

"You mean—give up—trying to get even?"

"I sure do. You never will, you know—not the way you're going at it. That fellow, whoever he is, has got you beat already. The only way you can get at him is through what the man in Lafayette Street calls ——"

Owen was off on a new tack. "Well, who the dickens is he, anyhow? What does he hold those meetings for?"

Not all at once, but in scraps at a time, Katy answered these questions to the best of her knowledge. The man's name was Andrew Christian. He had once been a hard-drinking man and almost a dead beat. Then one night he met another man in a similar situation. This man's real name she had never heard, but he was known among the boys as Colonel Straight. Talking about their wretched condition, they decided to help each other out of it. This in some way they did, clinging together and holding each other up. By and by they got a third man to join them; the third man brought a fourth; the fourth a fifth, and so on. Presently they had a club, commonly known as the Down and Out Club, made up entirely of broken men who were trying to reconstruct their lives.

The meetings in Lafayette Street had grown out of an accident. One evening some of the members of the

club had got to discussing religion, and in view of the contradictory opinions expressed had called in Mr. Christian as referee. The debates interested the men so much that they became a feature of their Sundays. They got an opportunity to express their own ideas, crude as they might be, as they never could in any of their churches. Members of the club brought in visitors. Visitors applied for permission to attend without invitation. In the end it was considered best to rent a little hall which would be open to all comers. The name, the Sinners' Conference, was merely a nickname invented by a wag, but it had stuck.

Katy herself enjoyed going to the meetings because in them her radical, practical spirit found something primal which the churches did not offer her. The churches were too elaborate, too complicated, for a swift and simple mind. Moreover, they all seemed to her to pass the buck. Jesus told men to *do;* the churches let you off with believing.

In addition to that she didn't like the prayers, which were either printed in a book and were vague, or made up by the minister and were mealy-mouthed. Better than anyone could pray for her she could pray for herself, in the stillness of her own heart, in a way, she was sure, the good Lord understood.

Even less than she liked the prayers she liked the hymns. Some of them were sugary; some insipid; most of them overstrained or meaningless. She gave him an example:

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee;

Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flowed
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure."

Who could make anything of that? She attacked the whole of Wesley's spiritual lyric which has comforted so many thousands, with the sharp-tongued scorn of an irreverent generation. "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling." Well, she would be ashamed to put forward such a plea. If she couldn't bring something in her hand, why should she expect the Lord to have anything in his? It seemed to her that the meaning of life was exactly that, to *bring* something in her hand to prove that she had some value. What Jesus did was to offer up himself, so what could she do less? To lay everything on his sacrifice was just the everlasting passing of the buck which, to her mind, was the bane of Christianity.

What her argument came down to was that in religion, as nowhere else in life, you needed stark sincerity. To get at stark sincerity you had to reduce religion to its very few fundamentals. All the confusion you got in churches, ritual, music, flowers, preaching, fal-lals of every kind, were merely distractions to divert the eyes from the bedrock simplicity of Jesus' teaching of *doing* as the one means of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. It was because the religion of *saying* had established itself behind tremendous vested interests that the religion of *doing* was driven to such corners as the little hall in Lafayette Street.

With this as her confession of faith, she returned

every now and then to her message to Owen Hesketh. "If you're goin' to get even with that guy, the only way you'll succeed—as that man I've been tellin' you about has said to us often—is by doin' right and not by doin' wrong. Now you may kick against that like a horse against his stall, but there it is. The horse can't kick himself out of his stall, nor you out of your fix. I remember his once saying to a sailor, who was hot after a fellow who had done him dirt in some way I forget, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' He said that those words were often quoted as if God was full of the spirit of revenge which he'd work off in some fit of anger. But what they did mean was that God was sayin' to us, quiet like: 'Leave that to me. I'll take charge of it, and bring everything out in the way that you'll see in the end is the best way—so just keep cool and—*do right.*' "

The most astonishing thing that had ever come into Owen Hesketh's life was the letter from *Wardle's Magazine* accepting his article, and inclosing a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. While the money meant much in itself, it was the lesser part of the wonder. The incredible thing was that he who looked upon himself as shattered beyond reconstruction should have been able to write anything which others would consider worthy of a thought.

For a week or more he went about his work in a daze. Then, for the first time since he came out of Bitterwell, his heart began to thaw. Hot-headed, heedless, insubordinate as a boy, he had always been affec-

tionate. His sins, which were many, had in the main been sins of thoughtlessness. They were also due to over-confidence in the capacity of other people to put up with him. In the scrapes into which he and Wrig Coppard had got together—with Tiddy Epps as an occasional hanger-on too unimportant for blame—he had never doubted ultimate forgiveness. Even when as a man old enough to know better he had twice taken part in the raising of a check, Wrig's power to pacify his father by the sheer force of love was really the bank on which he cashed. By the same means he would pacify his own father; and though there would be rows and scenes, affection would triumph in the end. Foolish and presumptuous as this confidence was, its blasting became the crushing thing about Bitterwell. Bitterwell itself was slight as an experience in comparison with what seemed to him the collapse of love that had sent him there. Had it been his own son, or his own son's friend, he knew that his heart would have pleaded successfully even if justice had made the demand.

And now, with his little success, and with money in his pocket, something stole in among his emotions like a fragrance known in childhood. Warm and sweet, it was also soothing and strengthening. Its immediate effect was like the budding, the feeble budding, of a plant in a cold and dreary spring.

But feeble as it was, it sent his thoughts, his impulses rather, toward the two women who during all these months had been so kind to him. For Katy he bought a discreetly decorative bag such as she had never dreamed of possessing. For Mrs. Bird, whose

complaint was still the lack of nourishment, he began to bring home delicacies, a chicken one day, a pair of squabs on another, a box of strawberries, a pound of grapes, some new peas, whatever the market offered, on days following. In doing these little things something within him expanded, as if the bud, hard and unpromising as it was, were really trying to put forth leaves.

Under this stimulus, too, subtly and queerly, by no process of which he was aware, he found himself changing in his attitude toward his family. A longing for them crept in among the hopes which faintly began to form themselves. Not that he didn't suppress them. He did—promptly, sternly—but they formed themselves again. In a sense he forgave them—that is, he forgave his father, in that he no longer laid it up against him that he had delivered him to the executioner. On the other hand, the great fact remained that he was forever cut off from them, and they from him. Between them a gulf had been dug which neither they nor he could cross. After Bitterwell, after Hoorn's Hoek and the New Netherlands Garage, he could never share their life again, nor would they know what to do with him were he to reappear. It wasn't so much a matter of losing caste as it was of change of identity. Owen Hesketh had been put away in more senses than one; the man who now lived was J. Owen. As J. Owen he had written his article; as J. Owen he had been paid for it. It was thus he was known at the place where he worked and at the place where he slept. At the

place where he slept he had no suspicion that he stood for anything else.

In this mellowing of emotion he set to work more vigorously than ever on the new thing he had undertaken. This was a series of articles suggested by the editor of *Wardle's* to which he had given the collective title, "The Criminal as a Man." They would differ from most articles with a prison as their background in that they would deal but incidentally with prison life and discipline, and concern themselves with the life-stories of some of the locked-up. Each was to be the narrative of an individual, who he was, what he had done, why he had done it, and the twisted philosophy he had drawn from his experience. With a subject so fresh in his memory and so close to his heart, he was throwing himself into the writing with a passion he never knew he was possessed of.

The coming of his first proof moved him to a degree only second to the letter with the check, while the appearance of the article itself amounted almost to a shock. Waiting in a subway station for a train, he chanced to cast his eyes toward the news-stand. And there it lay, the familiar cover, with his title staring at him as if it was his face. For a second he felt like running away through fear of recognition. It was only when he remembered how impossible it must be to see through his disguise that he found courage to step up and buy the magazine.

Similar shocks followed when he found his article criticized or quoted in the daily press. The first such mention scored his personal plea as a whine and his

argument as an absurdity. Others were more flattering, admitting something in what he said, even when of the opinion that the change he suggested was impractical. Most flattering of all were the long citations, more or less without comment. For a week or more he bought all the daily papers, scanning them for the column headed "Current Magazines," disappointed when *Wardle's* was not among those spoken of, and excited when it was. In this way he stumbled on a paragraph of which the significance, however expected, seemed for a minute to hold up the circulation of his blood.

The engagement has been announced of Mr. Edward Wrigley Coppard, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Coppard, of Fifth Avenue, and grandson of the late Edward Wrigley, founder of the Wrigley Institute, to Mrs. Walter Frankland of Sutton Place, only child of the distinguished philanthropist, Peter Vandertyl. Mr. Frankland, it will be remembered, won honors in the Great War, falling at Bourg-la-Comtesse, in the Château-Thierry salient.

Crouched on the edge of his cot to get the light from the oil-lamp Owen sat huddled, his head down, his eyes staring at the floor, the paper fallen at his feet. So it had come! He had seen it coming as you can see the approach of a cyclone, but now that it had burst it overwhelmed him. Blandina—*his girl!* That was what he used to call her in the harum-scarum days. She had seemed the other part of him, he the other part of her. Charming, exquisite, the model of propriety, she had nevertheless transcended all the barriers between them to love a ne'er-do-well, and say she would never

marry anyone but him. When, in spite of that, she had married Wally Frankland, he had taken the news grimly; but now, with this blow in his heart, he was saying to himself, The bitterness of death is past.

And yet he had considered the thing probable. He was not unprepared for it. Indeed, he had been hoping for it, so that she might find Wrig Coppard out. Married to him, she would do that by the intuition which wives bring to bear on husbands. However closely he kept his secret, sooner or later it would transpire, to her knowledge if to that of no one else. Where would he be then—the hound? For himself, Owen Hesketh, there would be full compensation in that.

But somehow, now that it loomed in the near future, the prospect was less attractive. For one thing, where would Blandina be when she did find him out? That was a possibility he hadn't sufficiently considered. When he had considered it at all, it was only to feel that in her discoveries she would be punished for her faithlessness. But that first bitterness was gone. He didn't now desire her punishment so much. In the creeping back of a longing for his family there also crept back some of the old tenderness for her. It was like a tide which has gone out far, but begins to turn and come in. Creeping was the word, a gentle force, as impossible to turn aside as the ebb and flow from following the moon.

Why, then, should she not marry her man and be happy with him if she could? Why wish evil to overtake her? She had written him a letter when he had gone to Bitterwell, expressing heart-broken sympathy

and pity. Wasn't that as much as he could have expected her to do? How could he have looked for her to be true to ideals which he himself had kicked over. His heart had denounced her for not keeping her word never to marry anyone but him, when all the while he was admitting to himself that he could now never marry her. Not only had he been unreasonable; he had been absurd.

With that thought he went to work, only to find Tiddy Epps in a mood in which he hadn't seen him since they had grown up. In Tiddy's character there was somewhere the impulse that is in a worm when it turns. Docile as he was to Selma, he now and then reached a point at which he rose with his whole soul against her. Such an occasion usually came about through an accumulation of small rebellions none of which furnished a *casus belli* in itself. War just now had been declared over the question as to whether Little Tid, when he grew up, should follow his father in the garage or become a dentist. Selma had got the notion that a garage was vulgar, while the dentist's profession was refined. As a matter of fact, though Tiddy never guessed it, Selma's real romance had a dentist as its hero. Resulting in what her girl friends called a "disappointment," it nevertheless lifted the dentist's occupation among the poetic careers. To see Little Tid become anything else would cause his mother the same disillusion that it must be to a swan to hatch a duck.

But Tiddy felt otherwise. Though submitting tamely to aspersions on his own gentility, he rose in defense of that of his garage with the fury of a man

protecting his wife's honor. The storm having broken on one point, it soon involved all the subjects for revolt over which Tiddy had been brooding for the past six months, so that, as he himself put it, Selma got what she had been saving herself up for; but like a palm in a sirocco she merely bent her head and let the hot air blow over her.

As a result Tiddy went to the garage determined to do what she had been urging him not to do, and what he had deferred doing out of respect for her opinion. He was going to see old man Coppard and get his money back. He was not afraid of being in bad with any millionaire in the Western Hemisphere; he would no more back down before Wrig Coppard than before one of his own washers. He would see Nod Hesketh, get primed with points, and face the old man at the first opportunity.

All this having been poured out to him, Owen felt that perhaps the direction of events had been taken out of his hands. Such information as he could supply to Tiddy he supplied, adding only the caution that as his sister Gwennie's wedding would preoccupy old man Coppard's mind for the next few days, Tiddy had better wait till that excitement had died down.

While at work through the night he went through the sequence of revelations that would take place on Tiddy's presentation of his statement. When he had said that of the sum total of the debt he, Owen, had, four years previously, paid down the four hundred and fifty dollars which was all he had received of the check for which he had gone to Bitterwell, old man Coppard

would naturally ask what had become of the other half of the nine hundred handed out by the cashier. To this question he could infer the answer for himself. Inferring this, he would know that Wrig had not only been guilty of half the original crime, but guilty of the whole of a blacker crime in wriggling out of his share of the consequence. Wrig would then learn that he knew. Wrig's mother would learn that he knew. Owen's father would learn that he knew. And when all knew it would be impossible to conceal the situation from Blandina. He himself, Owen Hesketh, would have had nothing to do with it. In the hands of justice the only instrument would be Tiddy Epps.

To keep his status of non-responsibility he had purposely refrained from urging Tiddy and even from advising him beyond setting forth the possibilities of the case. When Tiddy lagged he had said nothing to incite him. His hope was that Justice in the abstract would do everything. And now she really seemed about to take the case in hand. Gwennie's wedding, he learned from the papers, was to be within three days. Allowing a week for things to simmer down again, within ten days Tiddy could present himself at the Coppard door. Once he had done so, that sword would enter the father's heart, the mother's, too, which could never be pulled out again. All the satisfaction he had craved for, prayed for in his way, ever since he came from Bitterwell, would then be within his reach. And as for Blandina . . .

The Sinners' Conference was over; the audience had gone out. Andrew Christian remained on the platform,

talking to a woman. A battered man with a wooden leg, plainly a member of the Down and Out Club, was switching off the less necessary lights. Owen waited till the woman had departed, then went forward.

Seeing him advance, the man on the platform nodded and signed to him. With this invitation Owen mounted the platform and asked if the chairman could spare him half an hour.

"An hour if you like—or all the time you want. Suppose we go in here."

Rising, he led the way into a tiny room which had probably been an office when the hall was used as a shop. Its furnishings now were a table and two not uncomfortable chairs. But Owen only noticed the man who asked him to sit down.

Superficially he was clean-shaven, round-featured, rubicund, with a quirk about the mouth, and a smile in his twinkling eyes; but a closer look revealed the stamp of dead and buried tragedy which always remains on the faces of twice-born men. His manner toward Owen was that of resuming a conversation that had just been interrupted.

"Let me see," he said, as they took seats, "haven't we met before? Oh, I remember. You're the man who spoke at one of the meetings not long ago. I recall your doing so, but not what we were discussing."

"It was the night when an old Scotchman had raised a question as to Satan as lightning falling from heaven. I said ——"

"Ah! Yes! That's it. It comes back to me."

"It doesn't come back to me," Owen declared, shyly,

"because it doesn't have to. It's been with me ever since. And now ——"

As Owen hesitated, he tried to help him. "Suppose you begin at the beginning and tell me all about it—that is, all about it that you want me to know."

"I'd like to tell you everything, sir, if you've got the time."

"I've got till morning. Go ahead."

Owen's story was as exact as he could make it, except that he suppressed all the names but his own. He admitted his crime, making no excuse for it. The one point he raised was to whether—now that the revenge he had hoped for seemed about to wreak itself—he should let it go on or stop it.

"You could stop it?"

"I think so."

"What would be gained by it—I don't mean by you—but all round?"

"All round, it would save people who've had a great deal of trouble already from having any more. On the other hand, the girl would be marrying a cad; and for her to marry a cad would be—hell."

"That's the girl you're in love with yourself."

Owen nodded.

"And if you let this garage-keeper go ahead you think it might save her from the marriage."

"Yes, sir. I think it might."

"And would saving her be your only reason—if you did let him go ahead?"

Owen considered. "I think it would be my chief reason—now."

"I didn't say your chief reason. I said your only reason."

"I don't feel so strongly about the other reason as I did."

"But you do feel that in saving her you'd get some satisfaction on the other count—that of exposing the man?"

"A little; yes, sir."

"I'm asking you these questions so that you'll be perfectly clear as to your own motives. Have you anything to hope from her still?"

"No, sir; nothing. She can't care anything about me, after all that's happened; and even if she did I couldn't let a woman of her record have anything to do with a man of mine. I'd have to protect her against myself as well as against other people."

"I see what you mean by protecting her against yourself; but against other people—how far are you responsible?"

Owen was slightly disconcerted. "I don't know," he admitted, slowly, "that I'm responsible at all."

"That is, protecting her against other people wouldn't be your business."

"I suppose not—from some points of view. But when I know things that nobody else knows ——"

"Yes, but haven't you more or less abandoned your right to make use of them?"

"Do you mean that I should stand by and see her ——?"

"If you didn't stand by, how do you know you wouldn't be doing more harm than good?"

"I don't know; but ——"

"Then before interfering why shouldn't you wait till you do know? I don't mean that you should renounce the idea altogether, but only that you should—wait. You see, we can always butt in if we think we must; but once we've butted in we can't draw back again. The lady isn't married yet, and who knows what may happen before she is?"

Having reflected on this, Owen said, "Then you don't think it's my duty to give her the benefit of what I know?"

"I don't say no; I can't say yes. It's not a point as to which I'm able to be specific. What I do say is this, that the trouble with most of us is that we try to spread ourselves over too much ground. By far the most important thing which any of us has to do is to keep right himself. By keeping right ourselves we help to keep other people right; but we can't help to keep other people right if we ourselves go wrong."

"Yes, but if I don't protect her, who will?"

"I can't tell you that because I'm not God. You're not God, either, though I can see very well that you'd like to be. I talk to a great many people up against problems, and one of the hardest things I ever have to do is to keep them from acting as God, and to let God act for himself."

"But can't we do anything?"

"Oh yes, we can do a great deal—with ourselves. But we've all got to tackle that proposition first."

"So that till I'm perfect myself I can't do anything for anybody else."

"No, not that at all. Shall I tell you the way I should go to work on the questions facing you?"

"If you would, sir, I should like it."

"I admit that they're difficult, but for that very reason the way I should take would be all the more urgent." He paused to find words in which to state the case clearly. "By satisfying your hatred of this man you would save the woman you've loved from an unhappy marriage. On the other hand, if you forego your hatred, and put a stop to the exposures, you let her run the risk. So which shall you do? Isn't that it?"

"That's it, sir, exactly."

"Now I'm not going to tell you what you should do; I'm only going to say what I should try to do myself. I don't want to seem canting or humbugging to you by using trite phraseology, but these are old and well-worn truths which can't be expressed in any other way." After a brief pause he went on again. "I should treat the whole thing as, to the best of my belief, Jesus Christ would deal with a similar situation."

"But how can I know that? I shouldn't presume ——"

"Oh, it's not so difficult. There's no presumption about it. If St. Paul is right we can have the mind which was in Jesus Christ if we only try to get it."

"Yes, but for me that's impossible, to begin with."

"Oh no, it isn't. The mind that was in Jesus Christ was not unlike your mind and mine, with this difference, that there was no evil in it. Out of his point of view evil had fallen like lightning. Banish evil from your own and the thing you decide to do will not be

very far removed from what he would have done himself."

After long thinking, Owen said, moodily: "If I banished evil from my mind I should call the thing off."

"Don't tell me what you'd do. Just do it—and see."

"But if I did it and saw, I should leave her exposed."

"When Jesus saw that out of his consciousness evil went with the speed of lightning he also saw that what was left was heaven. I think we pointed out that evening when you came to the meeting that heaven is the condition in which God's will is done. Now if when you've banished evil from your mind God's will is going to be done, you're not exposing ——"

He left the sentence suspended so that Owen might finish it himself, "Anyone."

"Precisely. Now think that over before doing anything—or letting the other man do anything—and then see whether you'll do anything or not."

It was after dinner in the pastel-colored drawing-room in Sutton Place. The April evening was so mild that one of the windows was open, and the curtains blowing in the wind. The wind had the smell of smoke, of salt, and of tar in it, the "tang" of the coarse-fibered life Blandina loved. Sitting down where she could sniff it, she watched her future husband promenading here and there about the room, waving his cigar while conversing, and making himself at home.

There was no denying that he was a splendid animal. As an accepted lover he was also a masterful animal, though masterful with a petulance that tended to get

on her nerves. When she didn't agree with him he pouted, pretending a fretfulness which he probably didn't feel. This childish play-acting irritated her the more because of its contrast with his masculine poses.

They had been discussing possible dates for their wedding, which he wanted in June and she was inclined to put off till October.

"You're just saying that to vex me. You know you want to be married in June, just as much as I do. What have we got to wait for? If you won't make it June I sha'n't come to dinner on Thursday night. And mother wants it to be in the early summer, because she always goes abroad in the fall. So there!"

"I'm sorry to disoblige her, but I've told you already I need the time to get used to the idea."

"You had all the time before we were engaged to get used to the idea. If you were going to keep me on the string like this, what made you say you'd marry me at all? Now look here. If you don't say yes to the twelfth of June I'll ——"

The minute had come for which she had been waiting ever since the sleepless night she had spent after reading an article in *Wardle's Magazine*. The words she had used on reaching the last line were those she was using still: "It *is* he! No, no, it can't be." The one clause always brought the other as its sequence. It was so clear; and yet it was so impossible. The story was so like the one which nearly five years earlier had been written on her heart; and yet it was so unlike. Besides, she couldn't think of Nod as having written it. She knew that in the use of words he had a certain facility;

but this was the language and thought of maturity, whereas he had always in her knowledge of him been light-minded and irresponsible. Even though she had expected him to outgrow this phase and settle down, she had not supposed him capable of this intensity.

But if it were he. . .

Though two weeks had passed since her reading of the article, she had said nothing about it to Wrig, partly because she needed to be sure in her own mind, partly because Gwennie Hesketh's wedding had absorbed her. That is, it had been the predominant interest in their circle, though between the Hesketh and Coppard families a coldness had grown up, except as between the two fathers. Wrig had sent a present and had gone to the church; further than that, he said, it was no concern of his. Blandina had acknowledged her new position to the extent of going to the service under Mrs. Coppard's wing, and sitting between her and Wrig. But all that was now a week in the background and the necessity for thinking of other things had come round.

She had purposely left *Wardle's Magazine* lying on a table in the drawing-room. "By the way," she broke in on what Wrig was saying he would do, "have you seen that?"

As he passed the table in his promenade he bent to look at the magazine. "No. Why should I have seen it? Convicts don't appeal to me, beyond keeping them locked up."

"They appeal to me. There's something about them

I find rather—rather fascinating. I always feel as if I might have been one of them myself."

"I notice that you're sometimes morbid."

"Perhaps I am—in some ways."

"I'm afraid I'm too healthy and normal ——"

"All the same, I think you'd be interested in what this man says, especially where . . . If you'd bring me the thing I could show you the one or two paragraphs in particular. . . . "

As he sat under a light and read she watched him closely. From his face she could gather nothing. The paragraphs to which she had directed him were those in which the writer told the story of his crime. In this the only variation from the facts was in the substitution of fifteen for nine. The original check had been for fifteen dollars; this had been raised to fifteen hundred. The inference could therefore be drawn that though the case was like Owen Hesketh's case, it was not the same.

There was but one detail about Wrig as he sat that Blandina thought might mean a betrayal. To read the lines she had indicated might have taken him two minutes; he took ten or twelve. For most of that time he seemed not to be reading at all, but to be thinking. Had he been reading he would have turned a page; he would have looked back to the beginning or on to the end; but he did nothing. Holding the volume motionless, he sat motionless. When at last he seemed to decide what to do he threw the magazine on the table and half turned toward her, without, however, having to look her in the face.

"Well, what's it got to do with me?"

"Oh, nothing, if you don't think it has. I only supposed it might—it might remind you of Nod Hesketh."

"It doesn't. But as far as I'm concerned Nod Hesketh is dead and buried, and I hope he'll stay so."

"He's not dead and buried for me."

"I know he isn't, and I'm sorry." He jumped to his feet and began again in his petulant, persistent voice, "Now what about that date—the twelfth of June?"

There were days now when Katy couldn't go to work because her mother had to stay in bed. Though seemingly philosophical about it, Danny's disappearance preyed on their minds. "When 'e's at Bitterwell," the old lady moaned, "that's one thing. I know where 'e is and that 'e can't get into mischief. But when 'e's off like that where I don't 'ear nothin' about 'im—and me 'avin' gone through it all with 'is father—and so weak from not gettin' proper nourishment—Oh dear! Oh dear!—why does people go and 'ave children?"

"You see, madam," Katy explained to Mrs. Frankland, when apologizing for not being more regular with her work, "my mother has nothing to think about but Danny. When other people have sons who disappear—like Mrs. Hesketh—you knew she had a son that never came home, madam, didn't you?—they've got other things to occupy their minds; they haven't to sit and brood over the same old thing, night after night, and day after day, the way my poor mother does; and so ——"

"Hasn't she anyone at all to drop in and see her?"

"Only one—a Mrs. Gassaway—and she can't come very often—once in two weeks or so—because she's got her own work to do—and a husband not very well ——"

"It must be awfully lonely when you're out."

"It's not the loneliness she minds—she's used to that—if she wasn't always wondering about Danny—and when he'll be caught—and what he'll have done—and everything like that."

No more was said at this time because Mrs. Frankland went away, but Katy was content. She had got in her reference to Owen, without appearing to drag it in, and that might prove a point of departure for another day. She had to admit that she was on less cozy terms with Mrs. Frankland than with any other of her customers. Her personal touch with this employer was of the slightest, the maid acting as the go-between. Only once or twice had Mrs. Frankland come into the sewing-room to give an order or ask a question, leaving as soon as the errand was accomplished. Sweet and gracious while there, she seemed to give no thought to one so unimportant as a seamstress apart from what she came to do.

With Mrs. Hesketh it was otherwise, though that intimacy—if the word could be applied—had also been slow in growing. What it had done, in Katy's estimation, was to give Mrs. Hesketh the outlet of talking of her son to one who understood his situation and was confident that he would one day reappear.

On this last point especially, though Katy didn't

know it, Mrs. Hesketh was often struck by the sewing-woman's certainty. She talked about Owen as if gifted with a kind of second sight. She could almost tell his mother what he was doing, and what kind of character he was building for himself. She, Owen's mother, came indeed to listening to this woman in something like the way in which people who have lost those dear to them will hang on the words of mediums.

Then, too, the sharp precision of Katy's philosophy brought to a soul nourished on beauties and traditions so complex that they seemed to lose their point, a definiteness to which she had never been accustomed. Seek first the Kingdom and Righteousness, and everything else will take care of itself. Don't worry over what you can't change. That is in the hands of mightier forces than you can bring to bear. With the Kingdom and Righteousness as your goal you'll find that evil—the things you're afraid of—will go out of your heaven like lightning.

Though a clergyman's daughter and a clergyman's wife, Mrs. Hesketh had never heard this familiar truth made so positively a rule of life. Never had it been put to her that the surest way in which she could help her son would be in cleansing her own mode of conduct. Her own mode of conduct she had always supposed to be good enough; but now when she came to inspect it . . .

In Katy's own mind these things boiled themselves down to the simple fact that she thought she was of help to Mrs. Hesketh. That she was also of help to

Owen went without saying. Then, too, there was the fact that some one held the strings to the situation. They were not at loose ends. Whenever Owen was ready they could be gathered up again. Even before he was ready, if necessity arose, there was some one able to bring the family together again. For example, neither Mrs. Hesketh nor her husband could fall sick unto death without having Owen sent back to them. The fact that there was this certainty helped Katy herself to endure the separation between them, and carry the suspense.

But with Mrs. Frankland she had as yet made no headway. Indeed, it seemed the reverse of headway when the maid informed her, before the public announcement had been made, of her mistress's engagement to handsome young Mr. Coppard. With this information Katy went through two brief and swift mental experiences, both of which proved her mettle. First the thought came to her, with a great leap of joy, that with Mrs. Frankland removed there would be less fear of Owen's leaving her. But instantly she saw that this was the Satan who must be hurled out from heaven, and forthwith she hurled him. Then she remembered that, according to her own philosophy, Blandina Frankland's marriage was in the direction of a power that would take care of it, and that it was not for her to be glad or sorry or have an opinion about it. She didn't know whom Blandina Frankland was to marry, or with whom she would be happy. That not being her business, she must dismiss it from her thoughts. Her

business was not in directing other people's lives, but in making the most of her own.

Making the most of her own all at once became more difficult. On a day when her mother was in bed, and she had to stay home from work, the front door, which was not always kept locked, was suddenly flung open, and Danny crept in with the sneaking swiftness of a mouse gliding to a hole.

"They're after me," he whispered, from the entry. "Where can I go?" A forlorn object, white as a sheet, he was hatless and coatless, his shirt torn as from a scuffle, his cheek stained with blood. Katy, who had been limping about the kitchen, was struck dumb and motionless in the middle of the floor.

Danny, indeed, had not much choice. There was the attic, where Owen was asleep, and there was his mother's room. Instantly he chose the latter. With the instinct of the fugitive, once inside the room, he popped into his mother's bed beside her, pulling the bedclothes over his head. The mother herself, from long experience seizing the situation quickly, began to arrange the coverings so as to look as if she were the only occupant. Luckily the room was dark, the one small window being heavily shaded to protect her eyes.

Katy, returning promptly to her work about the kitchen, carried out the comedy by singing as she washed the dishes. Her voice, like her laugh, was shrill with the piercing note of ceaseless pain. The song was one she had heard from her mother, and must have been a classic of Newton Jukes. The beat being sharply

staccato in any case, Katy emphasized the tempo for the sake of drama.

" 'Oh, wéll, sir, yóu have cóme at last;
I thóught you'd cóme no móre;
I've wáited with my bón-net on
From óne till hálf past fóur!'
'Now réel-ly, Jane, your tém-per is
So vé-ry odd to-day;
I ón-ly stopped a whíle to chat
With lit-tle Fanny Gray.'

'The óth-er níght when át the ball,
As I sát in my pláce,
I sáw you mín-cing and co-quét-ting
In her fóol-ish fáce.'
'Hush, hush, my déar,' O then he said,
'And dón't begin to scóld,
You réel-ly will pér-suáde me that
You're grów-ing cross and ——' "

Katy had not screamed out the concluding word before the door was again flung open and two policemen, stout, breathless, and rather comic, came into the little entry. "Say, you! You've got that brother o' yours in here again somewheres. Where is he? Haul him out."

With a lifelong experience of policemen, Katy was no more afraid of them than she was of postmen. Turning, with her crutch beneath her arm, and a plate which she was drying in her hand, she said, nonchalantly: "As you wouldn't believe me if I said he wasn't here, you'd better look. Won't take you long. There's my mother's bedroom, with her sick in bed in it. There's the attic,

with our lodger asleep in his cot. Here's the kitchen. And that's all. No cellar. Ain't even an outhouse."

The policemen panted up the narrow stairway, whereupon Katy, listening at the foot, heard three men's voices, Owen's sleepy, astonished, and bad-tempered. The officers lumbered down again, lowering themselves heavily over the short treads. Coming into the kitchen, they looked round for a possible hiding-place.

"There's the stove," Katy said, maliciously.

"Now don't get too fresh," one of the men cautioned her. "I've known girls like you that was run in for compoundin' a felony."

"Gee!" Katy threw back. "Where do you get that talk? Must ha' been to college."

"I know some one who'll go to college—up the river—when we lay our hands on him."

"Lay away," Katy gibed, but continuing with her dishes. "You haven't yet searched the garbage can."

Back in the entry, one of the men raised the question as to whether they should disturb the old lady. "Sure," replied the other. "Like as not she has him in her hangin'-closet or under the bed." They knocked respectfully, however, receiving a weak: "Come in."

Tiptoeing timidly, the one followed the other into the darkened chamber, Katy, still rubbing a plate with a dish-towel, bringing up the rear. Mrs. Bird was lying propped up in the bed. A pillow beneath the bedclothes fortified her on the left; what seemed like a similar pillow did the same thing on the right; a third pillow lying across her abdomen simulated a large and

distressing tumor. To anyone but a doctor or a nurse the sight could not but be appalling.

Policemen having hearts just like anyone else, the kindly men apologized for this intrusion. "Oh, I know you has to do your dooty," Mrs. Bird breathed, faintly. "When anyone's so near the end as I be a little more don't make no difference. I dare say one o' you's 'ad a mother what's suffered ——"

The gentler of the two stood at the foot of the bed, gazing at her compassionately. "My mother was operated on four times for a ——"

"Come along now, Timmy," his colleague reproached him. "This ain't no time for grandmother's talk. See what she's hidin' in that there closet, and I'll look under the bed."

Neither investigation yielding fruit, he turned to Katy. "Any barthroom?"

"No," Katy answered. "But there's the chest of drawers. See?"

As she ostentatiously pulled out a drawer or two the man who seemed the leader cast her a look of mingled rebuke and friendliness. "See here, young woman, it don't do to insult the law gratuitous. One of these days you may find yourself in its tiles."

But they went away.

In the evening, fitted out with some old clothes he had left behind, and a little cash from Owen, who had long ago forgiven the theft of his hoard, Danny disappeared again. But the shock of his coming and going completed the poor old woman's prostration. Katy was obliged to write to Mrs. Frankland, to whom she had

promised the morrow as a certainty, that her coming was impossible. Owen himself shortened his hours of sleep in order to come downstairs earlier in the afternoon so that Katy should be free to go out and make her purchases. Bringing his work with him, he wrote on the kitchen table.

In this way it happened that on the fourth day after Danny's second flight he heard a knock on the door. It was a soft, timid knock, as if from a hand unaccustomed to the act. Caught in the middle of a sentence, he finished it to his taste before getting up to answer. It was probably, he thought, Mrs. Gassaway, or an errand boy from one of Katy's shops.

On opening the door the first thing he saw was a basket, as if some one were bringing a kindly gift of food. But lifting his eyes so as to see who the donor was, he found himself looking into those of Blandina Frankland.

Part Seven

While Owen stood on the threshold as if suddenly petrified, Blandina took a step backward. It seemed as if each needed to inspect the other in order to establish identity.

"Nod!" She could do no more than breathe the word. A second later she added, "What are you doing here?"

He pulled his reeling senses together. "I—I live here." Like something moved by a mechanism he continued in a toneless voice, "Won't you come in?"

She entered, but much as she might have emerged from the life of earth into another phase of existence. Of the poverty, the contracted space, the smell of earth and antiquity, she was unable as yet to take cognizance. She could grasp but one impression, that somehow the dead had come to life again.

Since it was necessary to do something in order to seem sane, he took the basket from her hand and put it on a chair. There were two more chairs, one at each end of the table which stood against the wall. He drew out one, and she sat down in it. He himself took that from which he had just risen, his writing materials before him. The acts were machine-like because his mind no longer seemed to work.

She grasped at the easiest thing to say. "What have you got there?"

"Oh, just some writing. Doing it to pass the time."

"Have you—have you—published anything?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of."

Though their minds were full of the subject, it dropped because speech was too difficult. Speech being only possible where minds are to some extent adjusted to each other, between these two there was nothing to say—and everything.

Sitting at the other end of the table, his dark sea-blue eyes burnt into her. After one swift glance she had turned her own away, looking vaguely but unseeingly about her. This he understood. Caught in a trap by a trick which Fate should never have played on a lady of her position, her embarrassment was natural. Now that they had met again in this queer little hole, their last meeting—their last parting—must be with her as it was with him.

That had been in the days when they were still "engaged." It was spring. Old Peter Vandertyl had gone to his farm at Rhinefields-on-Hudson. Blandina was to join him on the morrow. But for that evening she was alone in the big Madison Avenue house—the Vandertyl Building stood on the spot now—and he had ventured there to say good-by to her. She had let him in by a side door; by the same door she was letting him out. It opened on a tiny grass-plot, in which a stunted syringa fought for life in the smoke-laden air. The syringa was in bloom, scenting the evening. For the sake of secrecy she had turned on no lights. Because there were no lights their lips clung together as the door closed inch by inch, till it shut and parted them. The memory never came back to him without the

syringa's bitter-sweetness. To her it must be something of which she was now ashamed.

Since in that squalid little kitchen he was at home it was obviously his place to help her out of an awkward situation. "I didn't know you knew Miss Bird," was all he could find by way of a beginning. "If you'd like to leave a message for her ——"

"Th-thank you. But I suppose she won't be long."

"I—I don't know. Sometimes—sometimes—she is."

"I'm—I'm not in a hurry. I can wait—a little while."

Again there was no more to say; but as her eyes shot him a hurried, frightened glance, it was he who now averted his. For one thing, he was thinking of his clothes; for another of his hands. His hands betrayed most. They were the gnarled, coarsened, desiccated hands that are constantly in water, doing hard manual work. The knuckles were enlarged; the nails broken and blackened. They were an ex-convict's hands. He thrust them out of sight.

Her own, ungloved, rested on the table, clasped in her intensity. He had always thought of them as baby hands, soft, dimpled, helpless, like her character. They were so exquisite now that he wondered how his own could have ever touched them. She was entirely exquisite, in the simplest of dark-blue costumes, with a long rolled collar in grass green, of exactly the colors in her emerald-and-sapphire ring. He noticed the ring, because it was the only one she was wearing. Even Wally Frankland's wedding ring had been taken off. He drew the conclusion that it was her engagement

ring. In a way in which he had not realized it hitherto it came over him now that she had married one man and become engaged to another since that evening perfumed with syringa.

Renewing the attempt to ease her constraint, he risked another question. "Have you known Katy Bird very long?"

"Not very. She's been working for me about six weeks—ever since your mother recommended her."

In his amazement he jumped up. "My mother? Does she know her?"

"Of course! She's been working for her all winter."

"Well, of all ——!" Words failing, he dropped back again into his chair. "Then why haven't I been told ——?" But the explanation came to him at once. "Of course I couldn't be told because she—she doesn't know who I am."

"Doesn't know who you are? Then how can you be ——?"

Before she could finish her sentence the front door was flung open, while a sharp voice cried from the entry: "Say! What do you think that feller wanted to sting me for a chicken the size of a plucked canary bird?"

Swinging herself into the kitchen and seeing what she saw, Katy stood for a few seconds speechless, not from surprise, but because of what was passing in her mind. "Now I've lost him," were the words in which her conviction expressed itself. She meant that sooner or later now he would pass beyond her ken and care, and that the process had begun.

But that took no more than an instant. A second

instant was required to remind herself that she was supposed to know nothing of a past in common between her client, Mrs. Frankland, and her lodger, Jack Owen, a fact which made the situation easier. With her usual histrionic readiness, she exclaimed, in a wholly natural manner:

"Why, Mrs. Frankland! How kind of you to come and see me!"

Rising, Blandina advanced and held out her hand. "I was so anxious about your mother. I was anxious about you, too. I've taken the liberty of bringing a few things I thought Mrs. Bird might like."

"Oh, madam! No one was ever so kind to me before."

As the two women began to lift the white cloth that covered the basket, Owen slipped out into the yard.

Walking straight to the bulging retaining wall, he looked out over the water and tried to coördinate his thoughts. But they refused coördination. There was too much in them that was astonishing. That Katy Bird had all the previous winter been in touch with his family, and even with Blandina Frankland, and hadn't known that between them and him there was a link, and didn't know it now. . . . And yet she could not have known it. He was Jack Owen to her, and had never been anything else. Danny might have told her his real name, only that Danny himself hadn't known it. He had called him Heskie because he had heard other prisoners call him so, but none of them had mastered more of his surname than that. Among the illiterate unusual names are always a stumbling-block, and at Bitterwell the literate were too few to

count. Besides, if Katy had known he was Owen Hesketh, and at the same time had a Mrs. Hesketh as a customer, it was incredible that she should never have alluded to this curious coincidence. But of all the strategies of Fate this seemed to him the strangest he had ever heard of.

And out of it Blandina had emerged like a specter of the past. Rather it was he who must have been the specter of the past to her. She couldn't help seeing him now as a living man sees the ghost of a dead friend. Not only has the dead friend gone far, but he has become frightening. He couldn't but be frightening to her, as anyone is frightening after having passed through unspeakable experiences. "There goes the man who has been in hell," must haunt the returned from Bitterwell as it haunted the passings of Dante.

And she . . . ! She too had traveled far, and if she had become frightening it was only in the degree to which she had fulfilled the promise of her girlhood. She had been a girl when he had seen her last; now she was that most perfect of earthly things, a charming woman in the flower of her charm. Moreover, since their last meeting and parting she, too, had had experiences; but all they had given her was poise and authority. A woman of the world, for whom money, luxury, care, and association had done their utmost, she was as far beyond his reach as a star or a king's daughter.

Nevertheless, when, a few minutes later, she joined him, he found that some of the constraint had worn off and that the old habit of intimate talk began to assert

itself in spite of everything. It was somewhat as if she had been his mother, or Lloyd, or Gwennie. There could be no situation in life in which he and any one of them would not meet on the footing of familiarity, no matter how much they might be estranged. After all, familiarity is the special quality of families; and there were senses in which Blandina and himself had been as brother and sister as well as young people in love.

She came up behind him silently, beginning to speak before he knew she had approached. "Nod, Miss Bird has been telling me how you came to live here. She says her brother brought you."

Turning toward her, he said that this was so.

"And that was why you didn't go home."

"It wasn't *why* I didn't go home. You could put it the other way round. My not going home was why I came here. I wasn't going home in any case."

"Oh, but why not? That's what we've never understood."

"It ought to be easy. But perhaps I'm mistaken. Very likely it can only be easy to people who—who've been through what I have."

"But you knew they all loved you, that they wanted you back."

"It wasn't the way they felt, but the way I felt, that mattered."

"And how did you feel?"

"As anyone feels who's been—up there; in disgrace."

"But that's the very reason why they wanted you—

why we—why we all wanted you—to help you to bear it."

"I didn't need any help in bearing it. Disgrace is a pain you can stand best when you're alone."

"Still—you owed something to them—didn't you?"

"If I did I thought that was the best way of paying it—in the long run—by taking myself off their hands."

"But you couldn't take yourself out of their hearts."

"I said—in the long run. In the long run I should do even that. The people we love best die out of our memories—when we don't see them any more."

"Oh, do you think so? Have—have we all died out of yours?"

"That's different. I've got nothing else to think about."

"Well, we have other things to think about—but you haven't died out of ours."

"Isn't that a question of time?"

"I don't think it is with—with—most of us."

Besides making such responses as he could he was saying to himself: "She's sincere—she's sorry for me—she's changed—but she hasn't changed in that way." He believed her. If Fate had caught her in a trap he saw now that her embarrassment sprang of her utter surprise and not from a sense of social awkwardness. She was glad to have found him; something in her was fulfilled by this very opportunity to talk to him. This he could never have expected; and now that he saw it, it was not without dismay. He remembered what he had said to Andrew Christian, that if a certain

situation which couldn't arise were to arise he would have to protect her from himself.

He sought a means to turn the conversation to the things he wanted to know. "What made you come here this afternoon?"

Before replying, she glanced round to see if there was anything on which they could sit down. The crumbling log-parapet was obvious. "Let's sit here." He sat down as she did. "It was this way."

Then with a freedom with which she had never before spoken in her life she told him her story of the years during which he had been put away. Beginning with his refusal to answer the letter she had written him she established the sense of her helplessness, of her being adrift.

"You see, you were the only person in the world who meant anything to me, and when you went everything went. If I'd had a mother, or a brother, or a sister, or anything, it might have been different; but I hadn't anybody, and so when Wally Frankland came along . . . "

Her voice, which had always been soft and fluty, had now a cadence in it subtly sorrowful. All that saved her narrative from being a protest against Fate was the little mocking smile which never left her lips and which seemed to imply that she was laughing at herself. She told him of her married life with Wally, of her widowhood, of her solitude. Most of all she emphasized her sense of uselessness.

"You see, I can't occupy myself as many well-off women do, with all kinds of fussy good works. I've

tried to, but they're too—too impersonal for me. I'm not criticizing them; I'm only pointing out my own limitations. I do give my money to them; for the very reason that I can do nothing else I throw it out in handfuls; but there's nothing in all that that touches *me*. I'm still idle and futile."

In speaking she kept her eyes roaming over the river, though at moments they came back and flung him a quick glance. It was now the screwed-up glance of a concentration in which there was some bewilderment.

"But it wasn't only myself that was idle and futile; it was the life. It seemed to me that because I had money I'd been condemned to an unreal existence, like a woman in a Watteau picture or Mariana in the *Moated Grange*. I wasn't living life; I was only floated along by it. It was like being smothered in honey. What I need, you know, is something to be up against, something dangerous, hard. I wonder if you know what I mean?"

"I know what you're saying; but I've never thought of you that way."

"Well, what way have you thought of me?"

"As dainty and exquisite ——"

"Yes, there it is again. But that's only on the outside. I sometimes think that at heart I'm not so much a woman as a man."

"There's certainly no sign of that externally."

A little smile came and went. "That's part of my trouble. I don't care for the things that many women do; and for the things that men do I'm not fit. At the same time the things I am fit for seem to be denied me."

"And what are they—the things you are fit for?"

"I can't tell you in detail. They're all summed up in some kind of contact with real life. I know there is a real life—a hardpan life—which people who can't pick and choose live because they have to. I can pick and choose—which means that I don't have to take anything on compulsion—and that means I haven't got a life."

"Is compulsion an essential of life?"

"Well, think! If you've no struggle you've no fun. The very sport of sport is in doing something difficult. If I were a man I'd be a big-game hunter, or an explorer, or something in which there's a risk. I'd be that even as a woman only for being the sort of woman I am—what you call the dainty and exquisite. But even big game and exploration wouldn't be enough to—to satisfy—oh, don't laugh! and don't think I'm swanking!—enough to satisfy the something I want—and have never had. You asked me what brought me here today. Well, I came—to look for that."

"But what *is* that—exactly?"

"Hardpan. That's the nearest I can come to it. This Miss Bird's been working for me. Of course I could see she was having a bad time. Your mother told me about her brother—the one you know—and she herself spoke about her mother. The mother had nothing to do but brood over the son. That was making her ill. Because she was ill the daughter couldn't come to work. From little things I gathered that the mother longed for delicacies, and for some one to speak to who would

help to distract her mind. Well, I brought the delicacies—and the daughter took me in to see her."

"Queer old thing—but a human being like the rest of us."

"Yes, she loves you—because you listen to her when she talks. She says that nobody else does. And then—and then I was a novelty, too. It was just what I hoped to be. She made me walk round the bed so that she could see everything I had on, even to the way in which my stockings and slippers matched my dress. I think I've really given her something new to think about, which was what her daughter wanted. But as far as I'm concerned that's not the point; and the point I don't believe I could ever make you see."

"Try."

She made an effort. "You know I don't care for what's commonly called charity. The rôle of Lady Bountiful is one that's never appealed to me. What I've wanted is something to care about that was—that was in a way—my own—that I had to take up—that I couldn't turn from. And here it was."

"I don't quite see what made it your own any more than ——"

"It came to my door—it came into my house—I didn't look for it. It looked for me. It found me. It asked to be done. It was—what I haven't had since Wally died—a duty."

He nerved himself to say: "But you're going to have that kind of duty—again."

She screwed up her eyes till they closed, as if bracing herself to ignore the thrust. "And then it's real. Katy

Bird is living a real life. In as far as I can help her I'm in touch—in touch at least—and I might say, in touch at last—with the actual hardpan. I know it's very little—but it's something. You'd have to be me to know what it means to have something to do which, if I didn't do it, wouldn't—as far as we can see—be done at all." Changing her tone abruptly and flinging him the luminous smile that had always taken his breath away, she said: "Well, that's enough about me. What do you do besides writing?"

"I work in a garage."

"What, again?"

"Yes, again. When I came down to New York there was no job I could swing except in the way of unskilled labor. I did know something about garages, and so . . . "

"Shall I tell your father and mother I've seen you?"

He took his time before replying. "I wish you wouldn't—yet. Before I take that step I want to have pulled myself up a little further in the scale. Perhaps if I've accomplished something I shall be able to face them with a little more . . . "

On going with her to her car he asked about her basket. "Miss Bird hasn't emptied it. I'll get it the next time I come."

With that she sprang in and he closed the door. But when she smiled a good-by he saw easily enough that it was a smile that fought with tears.

"What ought I to do?"

He had come to putting it in that way. It was no

longer, "What do I want to do?" or, "What do I mean to do?" Unconsciously he had reached the point of thinking of his next step in terms of duty.

And so thinking of it, it was as clear to him as noon that, come what might, he must keep her from ever reviving the old love or being willing to marry him. Not that the danger had arisen; it was only that he must forestall its arising. There were indications—faint, perhaps, but indications all the same—that afternoon that such a possibility couldn't be laughed out of court.

And as he worked on his cars through the night the simplest means that suggested itself was to disappear again. Than that nothing could be easier. He had only to find a room in another street, and all trace of him would be lost. She had spoken of coming again, she might even mean to come many times, and when she did she mustn't find him.

Descending the next afternoon from the attic to go out to his work, he found Katy arranging a poor little tray for her mother's evening meal. As usual, she was on her feet, her left shoulder hunched by the crutch. It was hard for him to say it, but he brought it out, making it sound as a question of no importance.

"Oh, Miss Bird, would it inconvenience you very much if I gave up my room tomorrow?"

As she raised herself from leaning over the tray he could see she had gone white; but her nerve did not forsake her . "Goin' home?"

"No; running farther away."

"Is that because that lady came yesterday?"

"Partly."

"Are you *that* afraid of her?"

"Yes, I'm that afraid of her."

"Did you think I had anything to do with bringing her here? Because if you did, before God, I never ——"

"No, I know you hadn't. Only—in case she comes again I must—I must get away."

She looked at him long and steadily; but when she spoke, turning back to her tray, her voice had no break in it. "All right. Same thing to me. Can easily let your room to somebody else. No inconvenience."

"Thank you."

But before he reached the door he heard a sob. It was the harsh, bitter, strangled sob of one to whom tears are hateful. He turned round again.

"Oh, if you're going to take it that way ——"

She controlled herself sufficiently to say, with a stinging sharpness: "I'm not goin' to take it that way—nor any way. What's it got to do with me? It's only that it'll—it'll kill poor mother."

He came all the way back. "What? Do you mean to say that she'd care?"

"She'd care? Can't you see she dotes on you—in a way she's never done on Danny."

Retreat being cut off on that side, he had to think of something else. Necessity had so fixed his habits that he had little choice of action. The best he could devise was to sleep later in the afternoons and to come downstairs only in time to go to work. The difficulty here would be that he couldn't relieve Katy when she went out on errands, for as long as he remained in bed she would not disturb him For this, however, there was

no help, as something must be done. Whatever it cost him, Blandina must not meet him. If beneath the ashes of the past five years the fire were still smoldering, it could never be allowed to burst into flame. Better that she should marry Wrig Coppard, so committing herself to a life from which he, Owen Hesketh, would always be shut out.

With this in his mind, he took an early opportunity of asking for a talk with his boss. Tiddy received him in the office.

"What I want to say is this," Owen explained, at once, "that in the matter of going to see old man Coppard, I think, if I were you, I'd shut down on the whole thing."

Tiddy reflected. "Well, that's what Selma says. I and she've had quite a flare-up about it. But what about my money?"

"I'll pay that. Take the whole debt on my own shoulders, his share and my share, too."

"Remember, don't you, that his share was eight hundred and fifty?"

"Yes; not likely to forget it."

"Goin' to pay that, too, at the rate of five a week?"

"No; I hope to do it more quickly. I'm making a little money now by writing. In proof of what I say I'd like to pay you a hundred dollars now."

No heir to an unexpected fortune could have been more astonished than Tiddy as this money was counted out. "Say, Nod, that's the darndest! And me that's always thought that once a fellow'd been up there he was no good afterward. I sure am glad I give you a

chance to make good when you come and arst me. Best thing I ever done. Picked you for a winner with a look. Well, we'll call it off about old man Coppard, and the wife'll sure be pleased. But say, Nod, what's your game?"

"Oh, no game at all. Just thought that for the sake of a few hundred dollars it wasn't worth while to stir up bad blood. Had enough of that over my idiotic business as it is."

Tiddy eyed him with curiosity. "Gone—religious?"

Owen growled, as he turned to go out: "Perhaps I have. Might go—something worse!"

Mrs. William Coppard made it a practice to go into her husband's bedroom once a week, when the washing had been distributed, to see that his linen was in good condition. Every button must be on; every loop of tape in its place. A home-maker of the old-fashioned order, nothing escaped her attention, any more than the details of his men's uniforms could pass the eye of an inspecting general. She opened every drawer, and arranged it if she found it in disorder; she took out every shirt, collar, and article of underwear, and saw that nothing was amiss with it.

In this way she came on something he had hidden, evidently with the motive of keeping it from her and Wrig. A copy of a recent number of *Wardle's Magazine* was secreted at the bottom of a drawer, beneath a pile of underclothes. Even had she had no suspicions of her own, this discovery would have raised them. But she had heard of this article; she had even read quota-

tions from it in the newspapers and hadn't liked them. They had made her uncomfortable, though why she didn't know. Plainly they had made her husband uncomfortable, too, and while he wouldn't destroy the publication, he kept it out of sight. If he didn't destroy it, it was probably because there was something in the article cited on the cover that had impressed him.

This being her opportunity to surprise what was in his mind, she sat down by the open drawer and read the disturbing document.

Beginning with distaste—for crime and criminals repelled her—she found herself reading with avidity. She read with avidity because, to her horror, she felt she was involved. "That's Owen Hesketh," were the words with which she ended. Of that she had no doubt. As to the essential truth in his statements she also raised no question. Later, on thinking it over, she wondered how she had accepted the charges against Wrig—Wrig, her one idol—without a shot in his defense; but so it was. It must have been, she thought, that the brooding fears which she had never been willing to admit, as her poor old William had admitted them, now focused themselves in strength, and refused to be dismissed. In any case, she *knew*. Wrig had been a partner in Owen Hesketh's crime—and had said nothing about it.

A strong, violent, vulgar woman, she had nevertheless a standard of honor held up perhaps the more unwaveringly because of her vulgarity, violence, and strength. All the Wrigleys were combative and egoistic; but they felt themselves free to be so because rectitude of conduct was a principle from which they never

swerved. Wrig, her darling, had done this thing, and she, the mother who adored him, was as sure of it as if she had egged him on.

Though she knew she would never hold up her head again, she continued to hold it up sufficiently. In the measures she took there was a stern, unbending pride. She wouldn't accuse him; that would be useless, since his father had done so years ago, and he had denied it; but she would let him see that his baseness was not hid from her. If he then did nothing, nothing would be done; but at least he would be aware, for all the rest of his life, that she saw him as he was.

What she did was to order her motor, go out and purchase a copy of the magazine, and lay it on the dressing-table in his room. She knew he was dining out, but that he would come home to dress for dinner. After that she would see.

She saw, by waiting near the door when he came in, humming in his Rheingold bass, in high good humor with himself.

"Hello, mother! Just got time to change and get to the Jarrotts'."

She listened as he ran upstairs and went into his room. Then he must have had something like a shock, for the humming ceased suddenly and was followed by dead silence. It seemed to her a long, long time before he moved again and softly shut the door.

When he came down she was still at the foot of the stairs. It was a test moment. If he said anything in a free and easy way about finding the magazine she

might doubt her conclusions. If he merely passed her and went out, she would feel the worst confirmed.

He merely passed her and went out.

And yet there was a remaining possibility. If in his room he had left the magazine on the table, or thrown it aside, as if he considered it of no importance, that might indicate innocence. But if it was put out of sight it would point to guilt. She went up to his room.

It was put out of sight.

She did then what she had not done in many years, not since her sister Annie died—she threw herself down on his bed and burst into stormy sobs.

Owen had dressed, but quietly, so that Katy shouldn't know that he was awake. Not only was it irksome to stay in bed when he had had his sleep out, but he needed the time to work on his third article. The first and second had been sent in, and the first had been paid for, another two hundred and fifty dollars. The second would doubtless be paid for soon. With five hundred dollars in his pocket he should feel rich and independent, though he meant not to give up his job at the garage till his debt to Tiddy had been paid.

But he had to work. These were his valuable hours, and he couldn't waste them. He had formed the habit, therefore, of moving about the loft with the velvety tread of a cat.

Blandina had been there twice since he went into this retreat. Though there was no window by which he could see her approach, he could recognize her voice through the thin floor between him and the kitchen

below. The gist of what she said he learned afterward from Katy.

On the first occasion she had come to assure Katy that she need have no worry on financial grounds. She, Blandina, would take it as a favor if allowed to shoulder the burden of the little houseold till Katy was back at work again. Katy had thanked her, had said she had some savings not yet exhausted, but that if it became necessary she would not hesitate to borrow from so kind a friend.

The second time it was especially to cheer Mrs. Bird and show her some new clothes. The old lady had examined everything, even to fingering the materials. Then, before her daughter could intervene, she had launched into reminiscences of Bird's courtship, with details racy and romantic already related to Owen himself. Katy had done her best to "shut her up," but Mrs. Frankland had begged that she be allowed to talk. To talk seemed the most insistent privilege the poor old woman demanded.

But of himself, Owen gathered, Blandina had said nothing. Though he asked no questions on the point, he knew that Katy would have told him if she had. But never did he admire Katy more than for the discretion with which she treated an episode that must at the least have aroused her curiosity. Beyond the few words exchanged as to his unwillingness to meet Blandina any more she had made no allusion to a past acquaintance between them.

That this reticence was not by nature, but from principle, he was quite aware. It was part of that holding

back to let another develop by his own propulsion which was the teaching of the man in Lafayette Street. He had not the least doubt but that she was "dying," as she would have said herself, to know what passed between him and Blandina as they sat on the log coping, but by no hint had she betrayed the knowledge that she had seen them, which, considering the relation of the coping to the kitchen window, she couldn't have helped doing. The restraint was admirable, but it was only a portion of what she had learned in the Sinners' Conference.

And now he began to wonder if he had not learned something there himself. The attempt to cast Satan from his thought, though feebly enough made, had certainly not been without some result. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," he had often heard read in church, and this was precisely what had come about. He himself would have translated it, "Resist evil and it will disappear," but that was a matter of detail. The striking thing was that, since he had endeavored to approach his life in the way in which Jesus approached his—as far as he could perform this tremendous feat—the world seemed to open up.

The mental process, once he had made up his mind to it, had been simple. The first question he had asked himself was, What would Jesus have done had Wrig Coppard left him in the lurch as he left me? To that he could only say at once, He would not have tried to get back at him. He would not have tried by underground methods to expose him to his father, and through his father to everybody else. If he could not emo-

tionally have loved him, he would have acted toward him as if he had. To him the essence of love would have been not in feeling, but in doing; and in doing he would have treated Wrig Coppard with kindness and forbearance. In that way, and in that one detail at any rate, he would have cast Satan as lightning out of heaven.

He had, therefore, called off Tiddy Epps and exposed Blandina to marrying a man whom even kindness and forbearance could not make other than a cur. How far was he doing right in that? This was the next question he was obliged to submit to his new criterion. The answer would have been more difficult than he found it if the man in Lafayette Street had not given him a lead. It was not his business whom Blandina Frankland married. So long as he saw to it that she didn't marry him, he had no further cause to take action. Blandina Frankland was in God's hands. Wrig Coppard was the same. It was not his, Owen Hesketh's, place to usurp God's authority. His duty was to try to do right himself, and it ended there. Wherever that duty led him to help he must help; it would never lead him to control the destinies of those over whom he had not been placed.

Having reached these conclusions, he was at greater peace with himself. Trying to do right, which seemed to be an absolute condition of entering that Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus had come to proclaim, he was surprised to discover how many things, especially little things, he had allowed himself to do wrong. The effort to correct this method, though it meant an inner fight,

seemed in his outer life to open up the line of least resistance. It was like swimming with the current and not against it, finding thereby an unexpected aid in carrying him along.

It was in this state of mind that he got up and dressed that afternoon. Presently he heard Blandina's voice, soft and flutelike, in the kitchen below. He could hear Katy's, too, in warm welcome. A few minutes later they drifted away, and he knew they had gone into the old lady's room. The distraction of his thoughts having passed, he wrote with new energy.

He was so absorbed in his story of Nosey Bleach, a kind-hearted gunman, always ready to do some one a good turn, but even more eager to polish off anyone whom he happened to have it in for, that he forgot for the moment that three women's hearts were beating, each with its own set of yearnings, right beneath his feet. But a sudden commotion recalled him to the fact. It was not a noisy commotion; rather it was quiet, and perhaps alarmed. How the sense of alarm reached him he didn't know, but he raised his head and listened, as one listens to a suspicious movement in a house asleep.

The stumping of Katy's crutch as it hurriedly crossed the bedroom floor was unmistakable. It came out into the entry; it mounted the narrow stair. As only necessity would have brought her, he hastened to open the door.

"Oh, Mr. Owen, won't you please come? She's asking for you. There's a change. We don't know what it is." As he followed her down she continued: "She was all right till just a few minutes ago. Then all at

once she was different, stronger like, but so awful queer."

The bedroom, which he had never before seen, was small, dark, and stuffy. The bed took up most of the space. Katy's cot stood in a corner. At the head of the bed Blandina was waving a fan, the conditions precluding any kind of greeting beyond a quick look.

"Here he is, mother," Katy said, on leading him in. "Now tell him what you want."

Motioning Owen to a chair on the side of the bed opposite to Blandina, Katy herself hung over the footboard. The sick woman was in a sitting position, propped up with pillows. Her sharp thin face was more than ever strained; her eyes, which to Owen had always seemed dead, were alight with a curious flame. The hitherto mournful voice was now commanding and strong.

" 'Ere you are! Glad you come. You're the only one as'll listen to me. Katy there always shuts me up."

"I'll do anything I can, Mrs. Bird. Please tell me."

She gave her orders as one who at long last has achieved the right to issue them. "I want to be buried proper, like they do in England. I won't be took to no buryin' parlor, nor yet I don't want no prayers in the 'ouse. I'll be took to the church. I'll be took to the Church o' the 'Eavenly Rest, where Bird and me was married. 'Twas a minister o' that church as buried poor Bird, and I want to be laid beside 'im. Katy and me owns the lot between us, and we paid for it with our own money."

"Yes, Mrs. Bird, I'll see to that."

"And another thing. I don't want one o' them cheap coffins what's just put into the ground, with nothink around 'em. We 'ad to 'ave that for Bird, because we couldn't afford no better. But I want a clean coffin, with a shell to put it in. And before they lower the cover on the shell I want you to see that no dirt don't fall in on me."

Owen replied that in this respect he would do the best he could.

"Well, then, there's this. Danny won't know that I'll be dead, and so he won't come to the funeral. The only way to let 'im know 'll be to put a notice in the paper."

"I'll do that."

"And say Mrs. Isabella Bird, relic' of the late Edgar Bird. I ain't ashamed of it, and it's the last chance I'll 'ave to snap my fingers like in the face o' this wicked old New York, and tell 'em I don't care what they think o' Bird and me, for all what they done to 'im."

"I'll say that exactly, Mrs. Bird."

"And give the day and hour o' the funeral, and the name o' the church, so as Danny'll be sure to be there if 'e sees it. 'E's a great reader o' the papers, Danny is, always lookin' to see who's shot who, and if they was arrested, so don't you think 'e'll be sure to see the notice?"

"I think it's very likely."

"And tell the minister that it's the same Mrs. Bird what 'e buried 'er 'usband twenty-three years ago, and I know 'e'll be obligin'. He was awful polite to me in them days, and come to see me two or three times after-

ward 'e did; and I've always thought that if I ever employed anyone to bury me I'd let 'im 'ave the job."

The instructions over, she lapsed into a state not exactly of coma, but of withdrawal. When she returned from it, it was to say with a snap natural to Katy, but hitherto repressed in herself: "Say a hymn to me. Say, 'Jesus, Lover of my soul.' "

Thus commanded, Owen felt that he had no choice but to obey. He had not been a choir boy for nothing, and the words came at once to his memory.

> "Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly."

On reaching the second verse, she herself joined in with him, producing the words from far recesses of her recollection.

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
> Leave, ah, leave, me not alone,
> Still support and comfort me."

But on coming to the end of the stanza she said to Owen in her imperious manner, "Sing." As the son of a precentor, singing had always been to him a natural method of expression. Without hesitation or embarrassment he stood up, his hands on the back of the chair in which he had just been seated.

> "Plenteous grace with thee is found,
> Grace to cleanse from all my sin."

Here the dying woman herself joined in, her cracked voice quavering but powerful.

"Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of thee,
Spring thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."

The "Amen" she brought out with the long droning wail probably acquired in Devonshire. But she was not yet at the end of her ritual. "Say, 'Our Father.' "

Owen obeyed again, but she remained silent. When he had finished she added, still in her tone of authority, "Say, 'Now I lay me.' "

He repeated, slowly:

"Now I lay me down to sleep:
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

This ended, she said no more. The earthly desires having apparently been expressed, she withdrew again. Her eyes did not close, but they contemplated something which the others didn't see. Five minutes, ten minutes, perhaps a quarter of an hour went by in this silent looking. Then suddenly she lifted her eyes to the line where the wall and ceiling met, spreading her hands apart in a kind of ecstasy.

"Oh, the lovely gentleman!"

The words were no more than audible, not so much from weakness as from awe.

"It's—it's—it's"—the name came out as a cry—"it's —Bird!"

Straining toward her vision, the arms reached up-

ward. "Oh, Danny, I see your father, and—and he's—he's—lookin'—swell!"

The arms fell heavily as the spirit imprisoned in the poor little foundling from Newton Jukes was freed at last and went. . . .

Because Mrs. Gassaway was with Katy in the kitchen, and the dead woman lay in the only other room, it was easier for Owen and Blandina to meet again at the old retaining wall. The evening was warm and damp, a south wind having blown up a fog that hid the scattering of lights, while the air was filled with the moans of ferryboats feeling their way from bank to bank.

Blandina was making her report. "I've seen the assistant rector of the church, and he's glad to do anything we want. He looked in the old registers and found the marriage of Edgar Bird to Isabella Sunday, in 1884, and the burial of Edgar Bird in 1898. That made them seem like parishioners. He's coming to see Katy tomorrow. The next day at three will be perfectly convenient for the funeral."

That being so, Owen said he would insert the notice in two or three of the most widely read newspapers in New York.

"Oh, I'd put it in them all. You don't know which one might catch his eye. There are not so many. Don't let us leave any out."

Assenting to this, he said he had better go and telephone the notice as quickly as possible, so as to get it into the morning issues.

"A better way still will be to come with me in my

car—it's just round the corner—and we'll drive to the different offices. They're mostly close together, and we'll be in and out of them all within an hour."

As there was no way of dissenting from this, he was obliged to go with her. But progress was slow. From every corner of New York motors were converging on the theater district, which was also that of the newspapers.

"We've time enough," she reassured him. "When my father died we didn't get the notices to the papers till after eleven, and yet they appeared the next morning."

While being held up at a crossing he felt that she challenged him. "It's strange, isn't it, for us to be driving together just as we used to."

As this was his opportunity, he seized it. "Yes; but we mustn't do it again, you know."

"Why not?"

"Because it won't do—for you."

"Why not for me—more than for you?"

"As far as that goes, I'm willing to say that it won't do for me, either."

"I can only ask you why not again."

"I should think it would be obvious. If you want it in plain English, I'm not a fit person for you to go about with."

"Couldn't you leave me to judge of that for myself?"

"No; because I'm partly responsible."

"But I suppose I can claim some of the responsibility."

"Some, yes; but in the main it belongs to me. I must

see that your kindness to a fellow in disgrace doesn't expose you to ——"

"You'd allow me some power of being able to take care of myself, wouldn't you?"

"Not when the temptation came to you to be too kind."

"That means, I suppose, that you want to be let alone."

"It means that when a man's been—what I've been—and still am—and always will be—the only thing to do is to leave him alone."

"Doesn't one's—one's—*caring*—make any difference?"

He nerved himself to say it: "Not in your case."

"Why not in my case—especially?"

"For a good many reasons; but one will be enough. You're engaged to a man who wouldn't like it."

"If he doesn't like it, I don't have to stay engaged to him."

"But in that case, don't you see? you put me in the odious position of breaking up something that—that might make for your happiness."

"Oh, my happiness ——!"

She broke off with a bitter little laugh, and the car began to move on again. But after a few minutes she returned to the charge.

"When a man is what you say you must always be in the future, is it necessary for his friends to shake him off?"

"For some of them, yes."

"And among them would you put—me?"

"I should put you in particular."

"Why—in particular?"

"Because of the particular danger."

"Danger—of what?"

"Do you need to have me tell you?"

"If I didn't need I shouldn't ask."

"It's—it's—rather hard—to say it."

"It won't be so hard to say it as it will be to hear it; so that if I can bear it you ought to be able to say it."

He began with difficulty: "If there'd been nothing—in the past ——"

"But," she broke in, eagerly, "isn't it because there's been so *much* in the past that ——"

"That there's likely to be the danger now? Exactly."

"That's not what I was going to say. Please let me speak. It's because there's been a past that there's a present and must be a future. You can't strangle a life that's grown in people since they were children—just because one of them has been unfortunate. *Because* he's been unfortunate is all the more reason why they should—go on."

"Go on—how?"

He asked this question deliberately so as to show her what she might be letting herself in for; but after a second's reflection she was able to evade it.

"Go on—in any way—not inconsistent with an old friendship."

"If we were only considering an old friendship ——"

"It was that—in one sense."

"The question I raised was that of danger. Danger would arise—from what it was—in all the senses."

She turned round suddenly, facing him obliquely through the shadows within the car. "Well, suppose it did? Shouldn't we know how to deal with it?"

"Isn't the best way of dealing with danger not to let it arise?"

"Not always. Not when it involves a kind of—treachery—to something dear. There are times when we must see danger coming—and let it come."

"And when it does? What then?"

"Find the best way to meet it; but let it come first."

"But suppose I thought it had come already?"

"If it's come already you must know what it is."

"Don't you?"

She reflected before answering. "I might know what you mean—and not consider it a danger."

"What then would you consider it?"

"Suppose I took it as—a joy?"

"You couldn't do that—for two reasons."

"What are they?"

"Will you let me be very frank?"

"Of course! It's what we both must be."

"Well, then—of the two reasons—the first is that you must never marry me; and the second that—that you're engaged to some one else."

"But I've already told you that I don't have to stay engaged—to some one else."

"Even so, the first reason still remains."

"What makes it—still remain?"

"The fact that if it didn't still remain you'd be—you'd be committing suicide."

"Well, what if I should? People get to the point

where they'd rather commit suicide than—go on as they're going."

"Yes, but I couldn't be a partner to such a crime."

They continued to proceed by spurts. For long minutes they were blocked at crossings; for short minutes they were allowed to bowl along. They looked at other couples in other cars; and in every car, between every couple, some bit of drama, latent or open, was being enacted with analogies to their own. Some were going to the theater so as to establish a truce; some to forget indifference; all to seek fictitious experiences as a refuge from reality.

It was some time before she spoke again. "You see, I've been taking it for granted that as far as—as caring goes—we're still where we were five years ago. But perhaps I'm wrong in that presumption, and am only judging by myself."

"It's—it's your being right in the presumption that —that creates the danger. But you can't—you *mustn't* —go back to—to what used to be."

"But do you realize that in that case I shall marry— Wrig?"

"I'm afraid that that's something I—I couldn't trust myself to discuss with you."

She spoke with spirit, and some anger. "Oh, very well, then; I will."

The undertaker's men were turning the coffin to carry it down the aisle of the church, as they had carried it up. Mrs. Bird had had her funeral exactly as she had ordered it. Behind the coffin came Katy, walking with

Owen. Behind them, Blandina walked with Mrs. Gassaway. That was the procession. To the "mourners" the church appeared to be empty.

It was not quite empty, however, for in the shadows of a side aisle near the door a tall man, in clerical attire, stood beside his buxom little wife. Having entered after the service had begun, and being uncertain as to whether the Isabella Bird whose funeral they had seen announced in the papers, were Katy Bird's mother or not, they had placed themselves inconspicuously. The white-robed clergyman was in the chancel; the four others were aligned in a pew.

"Yes, that's Katy," the woman whispered to her husband. "I'm glad we've come. There's Blandina, too. Kind of her, isn't it? Dare say she's paying the expenses. I don't know the other woman—nor the man."

But, all the sonorous words being read, the recessional began, and the foundling of Newton Jukes started on the last stage of her pilgrimage. The man in clerical attire remained on his knees, his face covered by his hands, as he prayed for all those in sorrow, and Katy Bird in particular. The little wife stood up, bringing to her inspection of those following the coffin the sympathetic curiosity which women specially feel on such occasions.

Suddenly she gasped. She gasped again. She clutched wildly at her heart. And then with a long sigh, almost soundlessly, she sank in a heap on the floor.

Part Eight

ABOUT to leave his office on a Saturday late in September, Wrig Coppard drew from his pocket a letter received from Blandina a few days previously, and read it for perhaps the twentieth time. She wrote from Paris, where she was ordering her trousseau. Having gone abroad in May, she said nothing yet as to her return, though the wedding was but six weeks off.

Yes, I agree to the twentieth of November. I wish the ceremony to be at St. Thomas's, and as private as possible. As I have no family of my own, and your family is small, ten or twelve persons will include all we need ask to be present. But I am particular as to having Dr. Hesketh to assist in the actual service. You will have to speak to the rector of St. Thomas's about that, and please go as soon as possible to arrange the matter with Dr. Hesketh himself. The Hesketh family are the only friends of my own whom I shall invite.

It was not the content of these sentences that humiliated him so much as the tone of the whole letter. Indeed, the tone of all the letters she had written him while abroad had done the same thing. While she never receded from her willingness to marry him, she was laconic and, he often thought, contemptuous.

"She knows," was his comment to himself.

Leaving the office, he motored out to Old Westbury for the week-end with his parents. Since later he was to be allowed a month for his honeymoon, he was taking no holiday that summer. His only relief from New

York was, therefore, in making an occasional visit over Sunday, and going to his parents when he had no invitation.

He went to his parents less from a sense of affection than for the sake of keeping up appearances. That his sojourns at Old Westbury gave little pleasure to either his father or his mother had become more evident as the summer waned. Of the reason for this neither said a word to him. Neither said a word to him about Nod Hesketh's article in *Wardle's Magazine*. So long as he kept silence they too kept silence, remaining shut up within themselves, as he within himself. It was an odd change from the days when his mother worshiped him, and his father's great desire was to be on good terms with a son who had sometimes given him trouble. That change he must endure until he escaped by his marriage. Once he was married, Blandina's glamour would affect a reconciliation impossible to himself.

His reception was with the mere acceptance of his presence to which he was growing accustomed. To the best of his ability he effaced himself among his friends and neighbors. But on Sunday after luncheon—he had tried his best to get himself invited out—his father called him into the little room known as the office. Planned by Mrs. Coppard as an imposing little room, paneled in old oak from a demolished English country house, and furnished with the spoils of a French abbey, old man Coppard's untidy habits turned it into what she called a pigsty.

"Been alterin' my will," the father said, in the lifeless

tone that had come into his voice recently. "Sit down. Tell you about it."

Wrig sat down where he could get what distraction there might be in a parklike view through an open French window.

"First I want to say that the hundred thousand I was settlin' on you for your weddin' I'm puttin' in the hands of a trustee—two trustees, in fact—never believed in one trustee bein' left to make ducks and drakes of another man's money. Well, you'll get your interest as reg'lar as if you were managin' it yourself—which you won't be." Sitting at his desk, he lifted nervously paper-weights and other small objects, setting them down again. "Then about my will. Told you already that, of what I've got to leave, one-third goes to your mother, to be at her disposal absolutely—she's got her own estate besides—and two-thirds to you. Change I've made is that them two-thirds I'm puttin' in the hands of trustees—same trustees as'll manage the hundred thousand I just spoke to you about—instead of leavin' it to you outright, to do with it what you like." He paused for a few seconds before adding, "Anything to say?"

Though the son had plenty to say, since he boiled with rage, he didn't dare to say it. "No," his deep bass rumbled, and after a few minutes during which neither spoke, he rose to go.

"Let me see," the father continued. "What was the date you said you were goin' to be married?"

Wrig named it.

"Dear, dear! Sorry! Sailin' for South America on

October twenty-eighth on that pesky business in B. A. Guess you'll have to get along without me."

As he felt that this could easily be done, Wrig left the room, saying as he did so what he said so often nowadays: "He knows."

So long as his mother was present at the wedding, he knew that his father's absence could be explained. But all at once he began to doubt about his mother. In the ungracious mood which had lately come over her she might be capable of anything. He took the opportunity to ask her in the evening if she meant to go abroad that autumn according to her custom.

"Yes, but a little later than usual. I must see your father off on the twenty-eighth of October; then I sail on the *Gigantic* on the twenty-ninth."

"Oh, but, mother, I'm being married on the twentieth of November."

"I can't help that."

"But won't you change your mind?"

"If I was going to change my mind I shouldn't have made it up."

"People will think it deuced queer."

"Neither can I help that."

"But what shall I say to Blandina?"

"You must say the best you can."

"She'll get the impression ——"

"She'll get a good many impressions before she's done with you," she added, dryly; "the same as I have."

Though he knew well enough what she meant, he had to put up a bluff. "What's the big idea? Won't you tell me?"

"I'll tell you if you insist; but I think you'll do better not to ask me."

He turned to leave that room, too, again saying as he did so, "She knows."

Having made up his mind to carry out Blandina's instructions, he had no difficulty with the rector of St. Thomas's. Dr. Hesketh he found in his study. Their last meeting had been some three years earlier and had been a friendly one. Though Owen was already in Bitterwell, Owen's father seemed free from resentment toward Owen's former friend. He hoped his reception now would be as it had been then.

But it was cold. On his visitor's appearance the host had risen, and to avoid the necessity of shaking hands had pushed a chair toward him.

"He knows," Wrig said to himself, instantly.

With this misgiving at his heart it was not easy for him to state his errand, but with some faltering he stated it. The precentor, whose arm rested on his desk, kept his face averted. As he took so long to consider the request, Wrig came to the conclusion that he was deciding not what he should say, but how he ought to say it. When at last he spoke he did so without change of position or a glance at the young man.

"Will you kindly tell Blandina that it gives me great pain—really great pain—to be obliged to say no? I've reasons—quite private reasons—for being unable to do what she asks of me. Will you tell her, or shall I write to her myself?"

Wrig stumbled to his feet. His face was crimson. To keep his voice from becoming a bellow of wrath he

subdued it to its lowest note. "I'll tell her, sir. I needn't trouble you."

He bowed, though there was no glance to recognize the fact, and got himself out of the house.

"He knows," he repeated; "but I'll marry her in spite of them all."

Making his way down the steps, he could scarcely see. Only when he reached the sidewalk did he notice that a man—a workingman, he seemed to be—was standing there with his hand outstretched.

"Hello, Wrig!"

Wrig stepped back, shocked at being so addressed by an inferior. It took him a second longer to see that the workingman was Owen Hesketh.

It was Owen's first visit to his old home. Ever since Mrs. Bird's funeral in the previous May he had been promising to make it, but had not till now been equal to the effort. Equal was scarcely the word even yet, but he felt that he could not put it off any longer. As it was, he chose a moment when Lloyd was in Europe, and Gwennie touring with her husband in the Canadian Rockies, so as to have as few witnesses as possible.

Mrs. Bird having been laid beside her husband in a humble grave, Owen had come back with Katy to the little brick house at Hoorn's Hoek, to find his father and mother waiting for him in the yard. They, too, had discovered the log coping, and were sitting on it. As the returning mourners entered by the gateless opening leading from the alleyway, Dr. and Mrs. Hesketh rose, but only the mother came forward. The father stood by the retaining wall. Katy unlocked the door, but

remained beside it, feeling that her share in this meeting must at last be explained.

Between Owen's father and mother it had been agreed that there should be no reproaches, and no stress laid on the note of surprise. Surprise had passed, in fact, within the first half hour. Though they couldn't guess why their son should be in attendance at Mrs. Bird's funeral, Mrs. Hesketh had jumped to the perception that it was because she knew him that Katy Bird had made her way in among them.

"But why didn't she tell us when she saw how we were longing for news of him?"

Her husband explained this. "Because the secret wasn't hers to give away. If it had been necessary I dare say she would have made it known; but she probably agreed that Owen had a right to do what he thought best, without her forcing his hand."

"I know you think he had, but ——"

"Whether in that I'm right or wrong, it's the line that we must take. Anything else would irritate him to begin with."

So the mother went forward timidly, fearing that her mere presence might displease this son who had proved himself so elusive. Her fears were, however, dispelled at once by his clasping her in his arms.

On this the father had approached. Sharp in his memory were the last words this boy had ever said to him: "I don't want to see you any more. I don't mean ever to forgive you." Could he possibly be unforgiven still?

But those words in the visiting-pen in Bitterwell were

in Owen's mind, too. It was for him to be forgiven for ever having uttered them. For this reason he threw his arms about his father, kissing him on both cheeks, while tears sprang into the eyes of both.

Seeing this reconciliation, Katy Bird slipped within the house and closed the door, sitting down by the kitchen table to cry in loneliness.

Back on the coping Owen sat between the two, giving and receiving explanations. He told how Danny had brought him there, how Katy and her mother had welcomed him. Giving them the story of his working for Tiddy Epps, and of his writing for *Wardle's Magazine*, he admitted the hope that, once he had a prospect of supporting himself by his pen, he would give up his work in the garage. That, however, was in the future, and meanwhile he must earn a living.

On their side, they told him of Katy Bird's appearance among them, and the place she had won in their hearts. On seeing the announcement of the mother's death in the papers they had attended the funeral out of respect for the poor girl. Catching sight of him, Owen, in the little procession as it came down the aisle, the mother had lost consciousness for a few minutes, while the father had been so occupied in his attentions to her that when they came out, the hearse, with its one mourning coach, had driven away. Fortunately, Mrs. Hesketh had remembered Katy's address, and they had gone on there to await the coming back.

All this having been narrated briefly, the parents had gone into the house to thank Katy for her kindness to their son, and to sympathize with her in her bereave-

ment. On their return to Owen his mother had said, tremulously:

"Your old room is waiting for you, dear, whenever you want to come and occupy it again."

"Thanks, mother," he had said, and that was all that passed on the subject of his going back. So long as they knew where he was, and that he was doing fairly well, they were content.

Through the summer they had made him some three or four visits, always on the afternoons of the Sundays on which he did not go to work in the evenings. The mother would have gone oftener, but the father restrained her. They were not to pester him, or be too insistent. Relieved about him in their hearts, they were to consider that enough. Otherwise he must be left to find his own way, and develop as he could. In the position as it was they had everything to be thankful for.

It was when she could do it unobserved by her husband that the mother begged for at least a visit to his old home near the cathedral. To her it seemed as if in the mere return there would be a kind of magic. "Not yet," he would reply; but each time the answer became harder because of her disappointment. The last time he had given it he saw her furtively wipe away a tear.

After that he had to nerve himself for granting a request that seemed to mean so much to her. To him it meant as much, only in another way. To touch the old life again was the same kind of torture to him as it would be to a soul at rest to be sent back to relive the tragedies of earth. Not till now did it occur to him

that the life at Hoorn's Hoek and in the New Netherlands Garage had really been for him a time of peace and almost of rebirth. As he rose earlier than usual on a certain afternoon, shaved carefully, and dressed himself in the new suit he had purchased with part of the proceeds from his latest article, it was in much the same spirit as a man gets himself ready for going under the surgeon's knife.

Throughout the journey across town and uptown, the more familiar the scenes grew the more vitally they took him back to the follies that had landed him in a cell. Coming within sight of his father's house, the last time he had left it was in his mind like a wound. It was between six and seven of a winter's morning. He had been in bed. His mother had come and waked him, to tell him that two men were asking for him downstairs. When he had dressed, his father was on the landing outside, but he had passed him without speaking. His mother was crying in her room; neither Lloyd nor Gwennie was awake. He knew who the two men must be, and that they had a warrant for his arrest. Going with them, he was taken first to a police station, and then to a jail.

The memory was so bitter, and his resentment, newly roused by this proximity, so fierce, that he stopped at a corner to control himself. His temptation was to turn and go back to Hoorn's Hoek. "All that is in the past," he was forced to remind himself. "If there's anything in the principles laid down by the man in Lafayette Street, I've got to prove it now. If Jesus Christ were in my place—which of course he never could have been

—he would have known that his father and mother had acted in love, even supposing that they acted mistakenly. He'd have given them back love for love—not vindictiveness. It's vindictiveness that I must fight. Either I must cast it out of heaven, or it will cast me out. It's come to that."

Going on again, at last he saw a man come out of his father's door, a man whose figure alone he would have recognized as far off as he could see him. Again he stopped, though the number of paces he was away could have been counted. Hatred more violent than anything he had ever felt changed the very current of his blood. But again he pulled himself up. Clutching desperately at anything that would save him, he repeated, as if it were an occult formula : "Satan as lightning! No evil! No evil!" compelling himself to go forward, with his hand outstretched, and what he could muster of a smile.

"Hello, Wrig!"

For Wrig it was an unfortunate moment. Tingling with the rebuff of Owen's father's refusal to officiate at his marriage, he was now face to face with the evil genius of his life. To Wrig, Owen Hesketh was the tempter who had spoiled his youth and was now pursuing him with his hellish pen. That he should suddenly appear like this, with a smile on his lips and a proffered hand, was the kind of outrage which in more primitive times would have justified one man in leaping on another and dashing out his brains. As in a New York street this was no longer possible, especially on

the part of a gentleman, he could only give the damned jailbird a frozen stare and turn and walk away.

But as he mounted the steps slowly, Owen felt unexpectedly at peace. His hatred had gone. It had gone with the speed of a flash of lightning. Wrig's action seemed to have no meaning. The mere sight of him had renewed something like the sympathy which had brought them together as boys, only with a difference. As it was . . . well, life was long and had many readjustments among its possibilities.

At the door he was welcomed by old Effie. "Well, Mr. Owen, I sure am glad to see you. It's yourself that's lookin' fine whateffer."

He sat with his parents in his father's study. His mother had ordered tea. The inclusion of himself in this genteel ceremony struck him as grotesque. But when he rose to take his cup he observed that his mother's eye fell on his hands. It must have been the first time that she had noticed them, because she said, as she had said so many hundreds of times when he was a boy:

"Oh, my dear, can't you get your nails any cleaner than that?"

The exclamation broke the ice. Hitherto whenever they had talked to him, or he to them, it had been with diffidence, as if they were strangers. They had seemed a little afraid of him; he ill at ease with them. He would have said that the gulf which he knew his experience had dug between them had been recognized on their parts, too. Now, all at once, the little motherly

cry of horror at his nails did something to fill in the abyss.

Laughingly he explained the difficulty of keeping his hands in the same condition as his father's or Lloyd's while doing his work in the garage. "You should see some of the other fellows'!" He pointed to a portrait of a Hesketh ancestress by Sir Peter Lely. "My hands are like hers as compared with theirs, poor chaps."

She voiced a thought long in her mind which she had not dared as yet to express to him. "But surely, dear, you could have got something to do not quite so—so—humble ——"

"I know what you mean, mother dear, but when you're at the bottom you must do the work that's at the bottom, or you starve. And it's not so bad, you know."

"Oh, but it must be!"

"No; you only think that because you've never been there. But when you're *at* the bottom you find it has advantages you don't get at the top."

The father, who had had little to say, now intervened. "I can understand that, but what are they?"

"Well, one is the getting to know the roots of life as well as its leaves and flowers."

"I see. You get down to the ground."

"You get under the ground. Mother says my work is humble; but doesn't the ground figure in that very word? Seems to me I've heard you point it out."

"Very likely. Glad you remember it. It's a favorite idea of mine that the Latin word *humus*, the

ground, gives us the word humble; and that the humble is the starting point for all of us."

"Well, then, that'll give you a notion of what I've found in doing humble work. In beginning a new life it starts me with the simple."

"But you can't stop at the simple," the mother objected, with the boldness she was beginning to bring to bear on him.

"I hope I'm not doing that; but I've got to get through with the simple first."

"I should think you'd have done that—with all the encouragement you've had about your writing."

"No; I've still a long way to go."

"But couldn't you go that long way living here with us—as well as where you are?"

His father came to his aid "I don't think you should put that up to him. He must take his own time and go at his own pace."

"And I've got another thing to think about. I—I don't want to desert Katy Bird—till she can do without me."

Mrs. Hesketh was slightly shocked. "Why, what do you mean by that—till she can do without you?"

"Till she won't be left all alone."

"But are you obliged to keep her company? She's a very nice woman—and a good one—and yet there's reason in all things."

"There isn't reason in anything—for me—that wouldn't consider her first."

"Why, Owen! I never heard of such a thing!"

"Because, mother dear, I dare say you never heard of such kindness."

"Yes, kindness! But even so you can't take her on as a life's work."

"It doesn't follow that it must be a life's work if I try to look after her a bit—for the present."

"It's all very well to say the present, but you don't know what you may be letting yourself in for. You can't go it blind ——"

He laughed again, after more than five years in which he had scarcely laughed at all. "But I have to go it blind. We must all go it blind for most things. I begin to think that the capacity to go it blind is the big secret of living."

"You're quite right," his father indorsed, with conviction. "What you mean by going it blind is going on faith; and faith was never defined better than as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"All I can say," Owen went on, "is that at present I can't leave Katy Bird alone in that queer old house. After all she's done for me, I must do that at least for her. . . . You see, mother dear, that if it hadn't been for her you'd still not know anything about me, and I should not have dared to come home. It was because she made herself a link between us that things have happened as they have."

She seized on the one point here that roused her mother's instincts. "Why do you say that you wouldn't have dared to come home?"

"Not because of any lack of confidence in you or

father. The trouble was with myself." He added, in a tone he tried to make significant, "It still is with myself."

She spoke yearningly. "And what is your trouble, dear—exactly?"

"I can't tell you exactly—but I can't—I can't—come back to you—except now and then—like today—until I come back as a new man—with a new place in the world."

"I understand you, my boy."

"Thanks, father. And I haven't made a new place yet. I think I'm on the way—but I've still, as I said just now, a long distance to travel."

"Do you mean," his mother questioned, "morally, or from the financial point of view?"

"Both—in every way."

"And until you've made this new place in the world you won't ——"

"Mother darling, please don't ask me to say what I will and what I won't do. How can I tell? All I know is that for the present—mind you, I'm only saying for the present—I feel it my duty to stand by Katy Bird—till she knows which way she's to turn. After that . . . "

Blandina arrived by the *Icelandic* two weeks before the date set for the wedding. She was met by her trustee, and also by Wrig Coppard. The trustee, who was friendly to Wrig, knowing, as Blandina herself used to say, nothing against him, left her in his charge. Giving her keys to the maid to see her baggage through

the customs, she went off with Wrig in his new machine.

He told her it was a new machine, bought for her special use, and, though she smiled and thanked him, he seemed to feel that she hadn't said enough. At once he became petulant, in the way she detested.

"You don't seem a bit pleased about it."

"Oh, but, Wrig, I am. What more do you want me to say?"

"You'd say as much as that if some one at table had passed you the salt. You don't ask me the make, or the model, or about the fancy appointments, or anything. You accept it as if I'd paid for a taxi ride up town."

"I'm sorry. You see, I've always had a car—sometimes two and three—so that I didn't know you considered a new one so important."

"You've always had a car, but not one like this. That old Rose-Reuss you had before you went away wasn't a . . . This is a Franco-Hispania, the smartest thing on the market. Here we are running over cobblestones, and she goes as if on butter."

In justice to Wrig, it must be said that his enthusiasm over his new car was a bluff to cover up embarrassment. Blandina *knew*. Of that he was now positive. On the night she had called his attention to *Wardle's Magazine* she had left him in uncertainty. Going homeward from that dinner he had himself bought a copy and read it before going to bed. It occurred to him then that no one could read that accusation carefully and not know. If Blandina still had any doubt, it was because she hadn't read it carefully. All he could hope

was that of the three or four persons of importance to himself, no one would see the rag which he found so damnable. A month, after all, was not a long time, and an old issue of any magazine was a dead issue. If he could live through the four weeks before another number was on the book-stalls he could feel himself reasonably safe.

But before she sailed, something happened to Blandina of which he had never had any explanation. Indeed, he guessed she sailed because of it. All at once she had become restless, feverish, eager to marry him as she had never been before. It sometimes struck him that she would marry him out of bravado, or to get even with some one else. If there had been anyone . . . But there couldn't have been without his knowing it. It was that that made her so puzzling; and then almost without a warning to him she sailed.

She sailed—and wrote to him. It was then that he knew she knew. It was in all her letters, only between the lines. There he couldn't help reading it, because he had grown so sensitive. If she could know *and marry him*, he argued that she must love him more than he had suspected. He had heard of women marrying men in disgrace for the very reason that they were in disgrace, and their pity had been equal to their love. He thought that that must be so in his case. Blandina adored him, and even knowing what he had done—or had not done—from reading Nod Hesketh's article, she couldn't let him go.

For some sign of this he watched from the minute she came down the gangway, and watched in vain. She

was what had always been said of her in the old days; she was "nice." Her greeting was that of any woman to a friend who had come to meet her; but it was subdued; it was even sad. Whatever had happened before she went away, he had now the wit to see, it had made her suffer in the meanwhile. It had made her suffer—and yet she was willing to marry *him*.

In the first days of her return he came to putting it in that way—with the stress on the pronoun applying to himself. What did she mean? What was she after? Was she going on with their engagement just out of loyalty? If so he ought to know.

Since there was no way of knowing except by asking her, he asked her, "Blandina, why are you going ahead with this thing?"

She smiled, the enigmatic smile she seemed to have brought back from Paris. "You want me to, don't you?"

"It isn't a question of what I want but of what you want."

"I should think that the proof that I want it is that I'm doing it."

"Yes, but again I ask you why. I think I ought to know. Is it because you"—he stumbled at the word—"you love me?"

"Haven't we gone into that before?"

"Yes, when conditions were different."

"Different—in what way?"

"You know that better than I."

She considered this for some time. "Perhaps I do," she said at last, "and if you like I'll tell you. Condi-

tions *are* different; and if you want all the cards on the table, I'm perfectly willing to lay down mine at once."

But at this he was terrified. That she knew was bad enough, but if she were to tell him that she knew . . .

On the next afternoon Blandina went to see Gwennie Appleworth, who had recently returned from Canada. Though less than six months married, Gwennie had gained in presence and authority. Her beauty had ripened, too, as if love, wealth, and dignity had brought it to maturity. In a great apartment in Park Avenue she had preserved the distinction coupled with simplicity which was the note of her own character.

Blandina stated her errand as soon as the greetings were over. "You know, Gwennie, I'm going to be married on the twentieth, and I do so want you to come. You will, won't you?"

That Gwennie was embarrassed it was easy enough to see. "Why ——"

"Hardly anyone is coming that I care about. Your father and mother won't. Lloyd's written me that he can't. Wrig's own father and mother have gone away. I really feel quite desperate."

To this appeal Gwennie could do no less than respond. "Yes, I'll come, Blandina. I'll try to bring Phil, too. If you're really going to do it ——"

With this promise Blandina went to her point. "And I want you to bring Nod."

"Oh, I doubt if I could do that. He's—he's frightfully—shy—you know. He hasn't been here since we got back, and only once to see father and mother. To get a word with him at all—you know I hadn't seen

him for all these years—I had to go and look him up in that queer place where he lives. He was nice—and yet he seemed embarrassed that I'd tracked him down."

"Well, will you write to him? Just tell him that I've been here to see you, and to say that I'm going to be married to Wrig Coppard on that date, and that I want him to come to the church. Will you do that for me, Gwennie?"

For the first time Gwennie had a queer suspicion. Blandina was so tense, her manner of pleading was so far in excess of what the mere invitation to a wedding warranted. There was some degree of wondering in her own voice as she answered:

"Yes, I'll do that, Blandina, of course."

"Will you do it this very day?"

"I'll do it at once. I'll have it in the post within half an hour."

So Blandina went home and waited. "It's possible," she said, "that he'll get the note this evening, and call me up." But as no call came that evening she looked for a letter the next morning. Nothing having come in the morning, she watched the post throughout the day. Nothing coming that day, she waited and watched through the next day. "He won't let me do it. He can't. And yet if he doesn't stop me . . . "

Four days before the date fixed for the wedding Wrig Coppard got possession of some cyanide of potassium. Having read of its effects, he thought it the easiest way out he was likely to discover. That no way out could be absolutely easy he was quite aware; and yet there

were situations in which any way out was to be preferred to staying in. He had come to that.

He had come to that for two reasons.

First, his sin had found him out, or he thought it had. Knowing that it had as far as his parents, Blandina, and the Hesketh family were concerned, he had grown suspicious of everybody else. With the egoist's tendency to see attention riveted on himself, he read into the words and looks of his partners, of the clerks and stenographers in the office, of the members of his club, scorn and condemnation which they never felt. Not only had most of them not read the article in *Wardle's Magazine*, but they wouldn't have connected him with it if they had. But so sensitive had he grown that wherever he went he felt that people were pointing him out to each other as the hound who let another man suffer while he sneaked off scotfree. He could hardly face the waiters in a restaurant, or the woman left in the house in Fifth Avenue to look after him, without quailing inwardly. "My God! I can't stand it!" he cried to his own heart, and so he bought the cyanide.

And in the second place he found another change in Blandina. All of a sudden she had grown reckless, desperate. Again and again he begged her to reconsider the question of their marriage, to put off the date, to give herself more time. Her answers were either incoherent or impatient. He got the feeling of dragging to the altar a human sacrifice, who nevertheless refused to be let off.

Of this he had his own explanation. She was marrying a man who had lost his honor. Because he had lost

his honor she would be true to him when everyone else turned away. But she couldn't be true to him without an excitement which was almost driving her insane. It would be a relief to him now if she would back out; but since she wouldn't back out he must run away. And if he did run away—he must run far.

On the third night before the wedding he dined alone at one of the great restaurants, and took his farewell of New York. Then he went home, shut himself in his room, and wrote.

DEAR BLANDINA

When you receive this I shall be a long way off. It is no use. I am giving up the fight. When a man is what I am, the only thing left to him is to do what I am doing. With all my heart I thank you for your loyalty to one whom others have forsaken. If they knew all that I could tell them their judgments would be less severe. When I say that I have loved you with all my heart and soul you will understand that it is because of that love that I am taking this way out.

WRIG.

Having sealed, addressed, and stamped this letter, he went out and posted it. It was all he had to do, with the exception of the one last thing. For that he had time. Looking at his watch, he saw that it was a little after ten. Midnight, he thought, would be the hour. He wouldn't go to bed. He would drink it right there in his armchair. In the morning the woman who did his room would find him seated, and give the alarm.

In the meantime he lit a cigar. It was not that he wanted a cigar, but he did want a sign that he was cool.

He was cool and he was brave. In the lingo of the year, he had his nerve with him. He would go out with as little trouble as a light when switched off. What would come after that . . .

But on this point he had neither opinions nor beliefs, and scarcely any curiosity. So many people had died during the course of the world's history that what they could do he presumed that he could do. Besides, the war had made him familiar with the thought of death, and though that free-and-easy way of taking it had to some extent worn off, it was still a recent memory that dozens of fellows whom he knew would disappear between breakfast and lunch, and that his turn might come before dinner. It had grown to be an objective, not a subjective, thing, something to go through without too much reflection.

To escape too much reflection he went over in his mind the various things he should have settled before taking his departure. He found them all in good order. As a junior and unimportant partner in the brokerage house into which he had bought his way his affairs were straight; his will was in his strong box; he had no debts but that to Tiddy Epps, which his executors were requested to pay at last. Outside on the landing stood a grandfather's clock. It struck eleven.

An hour to wait! He lit a second cigar. It was some satisfaction to know that the butts would be found in the ash tray. "He sure was a cool one." He could already hear the comment among such friends as would be left to sympathize. "Poor Wrig Coppard! No financial worry! Going to be married to the smartest

woman in New York! No known cause for the act! Handsome chap! Got into trouble once, didn't he? over a check, with one of those Hesketh boys. Be missed."

The grandfather's clock tolled midnight. He got up at once, went to the cabinet hanging on the wall, took out the phial, and returned to the armchair. But in doing so his eye lighted on the evening paper, which he had brought home and forgotten to read. Though earthly news no longer concerned him, there was a sense in which, as the last he should ever get, this evening's would have a special interest. He had fixed midnight as the time, but it wasn't like a dentist's appointment which must be punctually kept.

With one leg swung across the other he read the paper as if it were an ordinary evening. He read it carefully. He read every line and every word. The grandfather's clock struck one.

He picked up the phial. He put it to his lips. He put it down again. After all, there was no hurry. In another hour it would still be time. He lit a third cigar, smoking it with a feeling of reprieve. Reprieve he knew was not pardon, but at least it was a putting off. If there had been a reason for doing the thing at any given moment . . .

He woke in a cold, wet, windy dawn. The cigar had fallen to the floor, and only by good luck had gone out without setting fire to the house. The wicked little bottle stood beside him on the table. There was still time enough, but the impulse had died out of him. It was one of those things that should have been done in the mystery of night. In this clammy, shivering day-

light, in which he knew he had taken a bad cold, it was out of the question.

Then he remembered his letter to Blandina. In an hour she would receive it. There was no stopping it, no way to intercept it. For a wild minute he thought of hurrying to her house and begging the maid or the butler not to deliver it. But that would have been grotesque. He couldn't bring himself to anything so ridiculous. But something he must do to justify what he had said.

But what had he said, precisely? He tried to recall. He was going away—very far away. That was all. He had said nothing of dying. He was sure of that, having purposely avoided a word that might have sounded theatrical. He did speak of "this way out," but that might have meant anything. All he had to do was to go away somewhere—if it was only far enough.

Suddenly he remembered seeing that night in the paper that the *Gigantic*, having returned from the trip which had taken his mother abroad, was sailing again at noon. He had four hours in which to catch her. His passport and his tax receipts were in shape. He had seen to that in case they should go out of the country on their honeymoon. It was also the slack time for sailings, so that it would be easy to get a cabin. All he needed to do was a little packing. . . .

Going it blind, Owen Hesketh found himself one day with the debt to Tiddy Epps, his own and Wrig Coppard's, paid in full.

"Well, Nod, all I can say is that you sure do put

the whole bunch of washers and foremen on the blink. Know what I'd do if I could? Railroad the hull damn lot of 'em—up to where you've been—and learn 'em. Minute you walked in that day I says to myself, I says —and mind you, I didn't know you at first—but I says to myself, says I, There's a hard-boiled guy, and he's got guts. Whatever he says he'll do he'll do, I says—and here you done it."

With this commendation Owen resigned his job as washer, not without qualms of regret, and with all reasonable gratitude to Tiddy Epps.

For going it blind had taken him a new stage on his journey. His articles were completed and paid for. He had money in a savings-bank. Several publishers were after him, and one had suggested his writing a novel. As a matter of fact, he had already begun one, and on submitting the first chapters a contract had been signed which was to bring him in what seemed like fairy gold. For professional work the attic, with no light but that of the oil-lamp, would be scarcely convenient, and yet he must make the best of it till going it blind took him out of it.

And in the course of the winter going it blind did so.

Crouched and cramped, he had worked all the forenoon, and for some part of the afternoon. His interest in his story was so tense that the attitude didn't affect him till he reached the end of an episode, and came back, as it were, to the ordinary world. Finding himself stiff as well as hungry, he went out for a bite at one of the cheaper restaurants and to stretch his limbs. He had found that a long wide thoroughfare, called

with an economy of imagination pathetically American, Avenue A, led straight from the region of Hoorn's Hoek to Sutton Place. Because it was fairly unencumbered as a promenade he had been making it his walk for most of his afternoons. When he saw the great building, something like a warehouse, in which Blandina had her apartment, he turned back again.

But on entering the little brick house, he was startled to hear from the attic a peculiar cough. It was a man's cough, dry, hacking, painful. Almost at once, with dangerous rapidity, Katy swung herself down the narrow stair.

"It's Danny," she whispered. "He's up there—sick. It's"—he had never seen fear in her eyes before—"it's —O, my God!—it's T. B."

"Let me go up and see him."

"No, don't do that. It'd only excite him, and he's pretty excited as it is. He thinks the police are after him, as very likely they are."

"They won't touch him while he's got the T. B."

"That's what I tell him, but he's frightened just the same."

"What can I do to help?"

"I'll tell you. You can go to Mrs. Frankland ——"

"I'll wire. I'll—I'll call her up. I don't have to—to go."

"Yes, you do have to go, because I want you to explain for me. It'll make it easier when I see her, if you tell her beforehand what the trouble is."

With this appeal, and in Katy's evident distress, he

saw he had to go. "Very well, then. Tell me what you want me to say."

"It's this way. Mrs. Frankland offered to lend me money when poor mother died, and I didn't need it. I had enough saved of my own. But that's gone and I haven't had time to put it back. Work's been scarcer since your sister got married and Mrs. Frankland's been away ——"

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, then, now the time's come—if she meant it—and I think she did. I want you to tell her that I've got to take Danny—somewheres. I want to take him in an automobile—a swell one—that the police won't be suspecting. I must get him to one of those mountain places where they cure T. B. and where no one'll know we ain't respectable. And if I do that I'll have to have some money—two or three hundred dollars."

"You'll need more than that."

"Yes, to go on with; but that I'll be able to earn. All I need is the start. And if she'll only come across as she said she would—and I do believe she will ——"

"But I could let you have that much—say, three hundred dollars. I've got more than that in the savings-bank."

"No, I couldn't take your money. You'll need it all yourself—for ever so long yet. She's got more than she can spend—she told me so—and she wants to spend it. Besides, I don't want you to ask her for it. I'll do that. All I want is for you to—to feel the ground like —so that when she comes to see me—and you must ask her to do that—she'll know what it is I need."

With this commission he made his way as rapidly as possible to Sutton Place. It was February now, and he had last seen Blandina at Mrs. Bird's funeral in May of the previous year. Gwennie had given him the message as to being present at the marriage, but to it he had sent no answer. He had sent no answer chiefly because he didn't know how to send it. What he had to say could not be said to anyone, least of all to Blandina herself. If she considered him a boor and turned from him in disgust, it would be wise to let her do it.

Then he heard that Wrig Coppard had disappeared. At first there had been some slight mystery, but in the end it was learned that he had only gone abroad. In any case, there was no marriage and Blandina herself went to California for Christmas. When she returned in January Gwennie told him of the fact, but going it blind had kept him from giving her a sign. Now going it blind had brought him to her door.

It was an imposing door, in spite of the warehouse aspect of the building from the outside. A chasseur in livery admitted him; footmen in livery stood about in the entrance hall, admirably empty. At Blandina's door he was obliged to give his name, having long ago forgotten the use of a card. After the narrow quarters in which he had lived for so many years, first at Bitterwell and then at Hoorn's Hoek, the pastel drawing-room seemed large. Only the glimpses of the river gave him the sense of being on ground he knew.

She entered at once, bowing at the doorway, and without shaking hands asked him to sit down. Had she said in words, "To what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

the formality and coldness could not have been more emphasized.

That was his first shock, and the second came from her appearance. She looked like a woman just convalescent after a severe illness. She was older; she had lost her color; her face was drawn. The faint mocking smile still played about her lips, but in lines of bitterness. With a new style of dressing the hair which was just "coming in," tightly drawn back from the forehead and knotted low on the neck, her profile had a precision, like that of a Perugino portrait, painfully in contrast with the old roundnesses and softnesses. Where nothing but good fortune had been written on her face, there was now the stamp of suffering. "Am I to blame for this?" he asked inwardly, though outwardly he was obliged to explain the errand that had brought him.

He did so in as few words as possible, taking his note from her. They might have been a lady and gentleman who had nothing between them but this interest in a philanthropic case. She glanced at her wrist watch. "It's a quarter to five. I'll go to her at once." In speaking, she rose, and he did the same. "If you get there before I do will you tell her ——?" But she corrected herself instantly. "But of course you won't. You're probably taking the subway and I shall go in the car. I shall get there first." She rang. "Tell Eugene," she ordered the manservant who appeared, "to bring round the car as soon as possible." Still taking his note from her, Owen bowed and thanked her.

But in going back to Hoorn's Hoek it rankled a little that she hadn't invited him to go with her in the car.

Then he found himself crying out, silently, "My God! I've lost her!" But for that he rebuked himself scornfully. How could he have lost a woman whom in honor he was bound not to win? If he had lost her it was so much the better, in that it settled everything.

At the house he found that Blandina and Katy had already come to a decision. Among the former's friends was a specialist in Danny's complaint, who knew all there was to know about the Adirondacks. She was sure he would tell them of some quiet place to which they could go, and would get in touch with him at once. Her own car would take them, and, in case there was any interference from the police, she herself would be with them. As for money, Katy was not to worry for a minute. She would have all she would need for as long as she needed it.

That night Owen spent with Danny in the attic. Though now and then he lay down on his cot, it was impossible to sleep. Danny's wakefulness would have kept him wakeful even if his cough hadn't done so. At intervals Danny talked.

"Say, Heskie, I hope you're keepin' on the level. . . . It's the life, believe *me*. . . . Well, I'm glad to hear it, only don't be too damn sure that you're goin' to stick it out. . . . Sometimes you'll be goin' as straight as a racin' horse, and all of a sudden you'll fall for it. . . . "

At another time it was: "Say, Heskie, did y'ever miss any money out o' that there knot hole?"

"Oh, you were welcome to that, Danny."

"Yes, that's what I says. I says, good old Heskie

won't grudge me this little pile. 'Twon't be stealin' it, it won't be; it'll be a present he's give me like, for all the nice things I done for him. . . . 'Member them overalls, Heskie? and that there overcoat? Slicked 'em good, I did. . . . Overalls I snitched from a guy what'd just got 'em done up at the Chinee laundryman's. . . . Knowed the bum, I did—long lanky chap like you, so was sure they'd fit. . . . But the topcoat, that sure was a funny deal. . . . Cuss'd left it in his Ford while he went into a shop to buy somethin'. . . . Out I sniggles it so as you wouldn't hardly notice it was comin'. . . . Walked round corner and put it on. . . . Come down to my heels, it did, but that made it look like it was the style and me a swell. . . . Walked back to where the Ford was, just as cool as you please, to listen to the cuss cussin'. . . . And what do you think? . . . Arst me, he did, if I see anyone foolin' round his car. . . . No, says I, I just come round the corner . . . and that was the God's truth. . . . "

Danny laughed till his cough choked him, while Owen didn't know what to say, for he was wearing the overcoat still.

The awkward moment came on starting back from Peace's Pond to New York. Peace's Pond was twenty miles from the station at which Owen was to catch his train. Out of this region there was but one way, and Blandina was taking it. It was only common courtesy, then, that she should ask him to go with her till he reached the railway.

For at the last minute Danny refused to intrust

himself to the care of two women, when the police were on his tracks. If Owen went with him he would go; if Owen didn't go with him he would stay where he was; so Owen had to go. And as a matter of fact, for reasons independent of the police, Danny had been right. It was a long journey and Owen engineered it. He mapped it out, found the way by the guide-book for the chauffeur, selected the hotels and reserved the rooms *en route*. Even more than Katy and her brother, because of her knowledge of the world, Blandina felt the luxury of being in safe hands.

Peace's Pond is a lowly Saranac, where lowly people take their sick. In one of its two lowly hotels Blandina established Katy and her brother till the former could "look about her." After that there was little to be done but come away.

They came away on a brilliant February morning, with the thermometer in the neighborhood of zero. Whoever Peace may have been, his snow-covered pond lay like a pearl in the heart of snow-covered hills. The air was as keen as the ether, the light in the sky as stainless as that which came at God's command before he made the sun. The village alone was untidy and forlorn, as if those who cared for the poor consumptives sunning themselves here and there lacked the courage to be neat. And yet if Danny could get well anywhere, and Katy could be braced and comforted, it would be here among these life-giving hills, cleansed of all impurities.

"Keep on the level, kid," had been Danny's parting word as Owen pressed his hand, "and don't let 'em ketch

you again. Always tried to keep on the level, I did—except now and then when I was orf it."

Katy, who had thanked Blandina privately, stood at the door to see them off, her crutch under her arm, and her aching smile fixed like the flash of a bayonet held up in her defense. None knew better than herself that with this departure the Impossible was going out of her life forever, and for that very reason no one must be allowed to see behind this steady, steely farewell.

As they rolled away she provided, too, the topic that came easiest. Whatever they talked about, they mustn't talk about themselves. Talking about themselves had ended on the evening when Mrs. Bird lay waiting for her funeral. Blandina would never forgive the months that came after that; and he had not receded an inch from the position that for her to marry him would be suicide. There was nothing in his life that she could share, while he could never share hers. That had been discussed and decided. Both for him and for her it was imperative that it shouldn't come up again.

But talking of Katy Bird was dangerous, since the theme was so involved with the more recent history of both of them. Insensibly, almost of necessity, they glided into the personal. Blandina did it first with an indiscreet question as to what he was going to do, now that Katy had closed the little brick house.

"I've taken a room in East River Park. I couldn't tear myself away from all that rush of waters."

"Oh, then you're not going home?"

"No; I couldn't do that. I know they want it, but I should never be able to take up that life again."

After a minute's silence she said: "I understand that, I think. It's like a woman who's been married—and left a widow—or divorced—or something—coming back to her father's house again and trying to be as she used to. Sometimes she has to do it—but it's always hard."

"My father understands, but my mother doesn't see it."

"Mothers hardly ever do. Because the children are always children to them they don't see why they can't feel like children."

"And then," he said, slowly, "I can't forget that—what I went through—bit pretty deep into me. It—it cut me away from the old life. I can't find a bridge that'll carry me back again."

Allowing this subject to drop, they drove on through a narrow picturesque valley where the snow creaked under the wheels of their machine and the sky became a richer blue between the closely serried summits. Presently she said:

"Gwennie tells me you've given up your work in that garage."

"Yes; I'm trying to earn a living now by writing."

"I've been reading your new set of articles in *Wardle's*. They're thrillingly exciting."

"Oh, it isn't excitement that's lacking in the yarns you hear in Bitterwell."

"I read the first article, too. I knew at once who'd written it."

"I'm sorry about that," he admitted, thoughtfully. "If I'd known I should be spotted I wouldn't have—given anyone away. It was lack of experience. Writ-

ing in Katy Bird's attic, and not knowing that the stuff would ever find its way into print, it never occurred to me that anyone who knew me could possibly lay his eyes on it."

"Wrig recognized you, too."

His astonishment put emphasis on his words. "*Did* he?" A second later he added, "Then that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?"

"Oh, nothing! Met him one day—face to face. Wanted to let bygones be bygones and shake hands."

"And wouldn't he?"

He shook his head. "I thought it was because—I'd been where they sent me; but now I see. He supposed I'd dished him up."

"He was very unhappy about it. You see, his father and mother knew. They'd read the article, I suppose, and somehow turned against him. Your own father had read it ——"

"Yes, I know. I'm sorry. If I'd known better I should have left all that part out."

"As you didn't I—I think it's all right—as it is."

"What do you mean by—as it is?"

"Oh, the people who are most concerned knowing—and other people not. What are you writing now?"

He confessed to writing a novel.

"What's the title?"

He gave her the title and the outline of his plot.

"I should think it would be very interesting; but I hope when you publish it you'll give up the horrible

nom de plume under which your articles are coming out."

"Yes; I shall use my own name. But if I were not an ex-convict, you know, my articles wouldn't have any value."

"I hate to hear you call yourself that."

"But it's what I am. It's no use blinking at facts."

Once more they drove on in silence. While resolved not to talk of themselves, the habit was too strong for them. The minute they were together they became like a husband and wife, with a long community of interests behind them. General topics were impossible when there was so much to say that vitally concerned each other.

They were not far from the station when she again, so to speak, invaded his private life. "I've always heard that it was a risky business for a man to depend on writing for a living before he'd got pretty well established."

"So it is; but I'm going it blind."

She gave a pensive little laugh. "I like that. I like the expression. It's what I'd do myself—if I could."

"Why can't you?"

"Because something always prevents me. I've tried —and every time I've been—turned back."

"When did you try it?"

"I tried it with Wally Frankland, for one time. And then I tried it with Wrig Coppard."

Considering it as probably his last chance, he made bold to ask a question which had long been on his mind.

"Wally Frankland I can understand; but why *did* you think of trying it with Wrig?"

"Shall I tell you frankly?"

"Please—if you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind—specially. In fact, I'd rather you knew. It was because—because—you didn't stop me."

"I didn't stop you? But how could I? It isn't my business—now—whom you marry—or whom you don't."

"Oh, isn't it? I thought that's just what it was—especially whom I don't."

"So long as you don't—you'll let me speak plainly, won't you?—so long as you don't commit suicide by marrying me ——"

"Oh, then it is your business!"

He saw that she had scored a point. He saw, too, that possibly he was rushing in to take a responsibility which, even when it closely concerned himself, did not belong to him. What, after all, if he had been setting up a bogey of evil which really wasn't there? His heart pounded so that his voice shook in bringing out the words. "To that extent—yes."

"So there it is again."

"There—what is—again?"

"The something which—when I'd be willing to go it blind—steps in and throws me back on ——"

"On—what?"

"On whatever it is a woman feels—or doesn't feel—when she finds that nobody needs her. In my case they

all—I mean causes and things—need my money—and I give it—but nobody in the world—needs me."

They were pulling up at the station before he found strength to respond to her. "If I don't say that I need you it's—it's—because I don't dare. You understand that, don't you?"

"Oh yes, I understand it—fully."

They drew up at the station. Thanking her for the lift he got out. As he put his hand through the open window for a second good-by he asked, "May I come and see you sometime?"

She seemed suddenly to have regained all the poise and all the rounded softnesses of a few months earlier. "I get back to New York tomorrow evening. Come the next evening to dinner."

"I can't come to dinner, because I've got no dinner clothes."

"Come just as you are." With the peculiar luminous smile which he had not seen for so long, she added: "You know, Nod, that it's—just as you are—that—that I like you best."

THE END

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